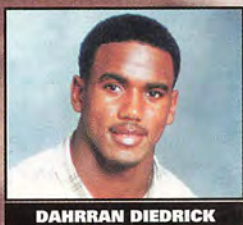
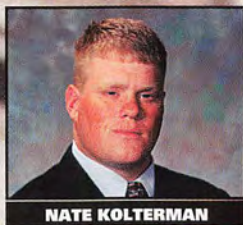


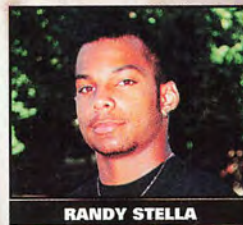
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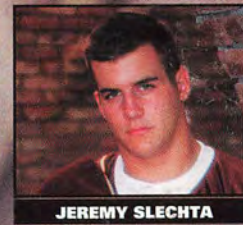
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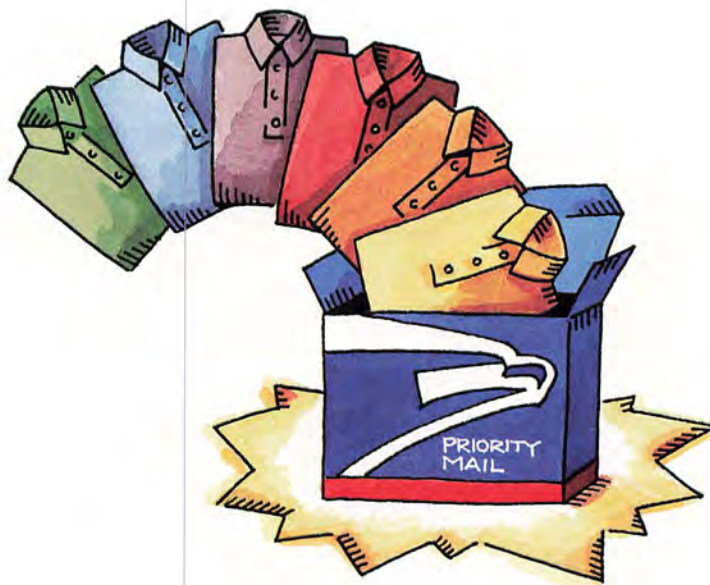
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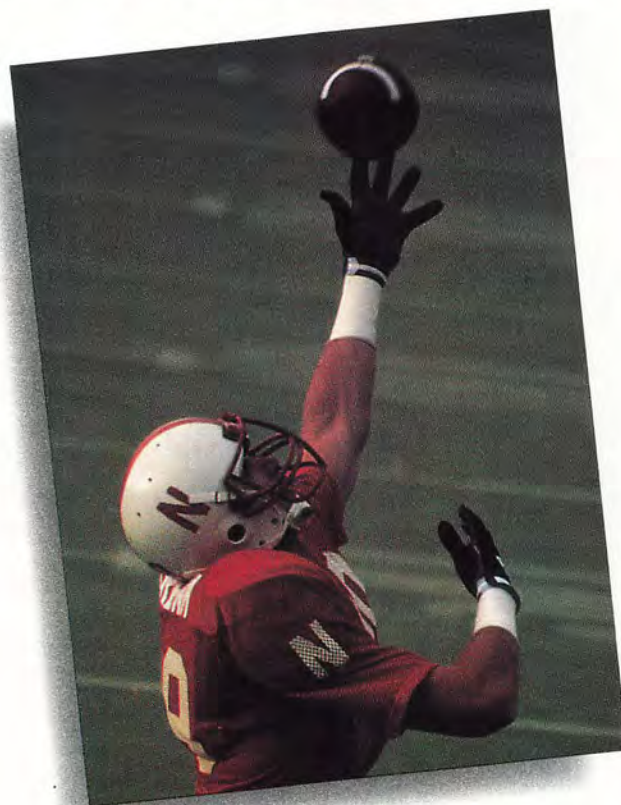
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# CONTENTS

MARCH 1998 • Volume 18, No. 3



## RECRUIT BIOS

Demoine Adams	14
Jon Bowling	14
Josh Brown	15
Jon Clanton	15
Wes Cody	16
Keyuo Craver	16
Mike Demps	19
Dahrran Diedrick	19
Aaron Golliday	20
DeAntae Grixby	20
DeJuan Groce	21
Chris Kelsay	21
Nate Kolterman	22
Jason Lohr	22
Shawn McGann	23
Matt Shook	23
Jeremy Slechta	24
Justin Smith	24
Randy Stella	25
Tony Tata	25
Wilson Thomas	26

## FEATURES

### 10 Making Contact

No school does a better job of targeting recruits sooner and more efficiently than Nebraska. That recruiting system may have saved this year's class  
By James Hale

### 38 In A Zone

Even the basketball proud are beginning to see that man-to-man is not always the answer.  
By Mike Babcock



30



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44



27

## DEPARTMENTS

Letters	5
NU Notebook	6
State Of The Huskers	8

Recruiting services might overlook in-state recruits, but Nebraska's winning tradition proves that to be a mistake.

### Women's Hoops

Paul Sanderford vows NU won't be left out of the NCAA Tournament this year.

### Men's Hoops

Nebraska and the rest of its Big 12 brethren will have to heat up in the post-season in order to lose the tag of "over-rated."

### Grid Recruiting

An overview of how the rest of the Big 12 Conference did on signing day.

### From The Beat

This year's squad may not be the most talented basketball team Nebraska has seen, but for entertainment value, there may not be an equal.

### All Sports

First-year coach Dave Van Horn understands that before the Huskers can climb into the nation's elite, they must first regain their footing in the power-heavy Big 12.

### The Last Word

Nebraska didn't lose a step in its recruiting efforts despite the coaching change that could have crippled most programs.

NUONLINE

(www.sportscom.com/huskers)

NEXT ISSUE

The next issue (Vol. 18, No. 4) should mail March 12, 1998 and will preview spring practice and the hoop postseason.

ON THE COVER

DeAntae Grixby (Jon Waller)



# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Please send your comments and questions to Letters, P.O. Box 83222, Lincoln, Neb. 68501-3222. Or fax them to us at (972) 851-1720. We reserve the right to edit the letters for clarity, content and length. For those with electronic mail abilities, [huskersedit@xcscx.com](mailto:huskersedit@xcscx.com).

To all Husker fans out there — do not count Frankie London out in winning the starting quarterback job. As someone who has been to the majority of London's games from his junior year in high school through the 1998 Orange Bowl game versus Tennessee, I have seen his talent. As his uncle, I am also biased. But I know he will prove himself as Scott Frost had to when he won the job.

Bobby Newcombe is exciting to watch. Like everyone else, when he touches the ball I stand up to see what's going to happen. But to win you need all of your good players on the field at one position or another. When Frankie wanted to play another position the coaching staff did not allow him to.

Going into his junior year, it's too late. Leave Newcombe at wingback, make up 100 plays to use him and the Huskers won't lose a step at quarterback or at wingback.

Earl Wright  
[edblu@swbell.net](mailto:edblu@swbell.net)

For a state that hates Nebraska so much, why did the Denver Broncos use Nebraska's 1994 slogan "Un-Finished Business" during their Super Bowl run? Must be trying to follow a winning tradition or need some luck of the red.

Where can I get my "Is there life after Dr. Tom? Yes, it's with Frank Solich" tee-shirts?

Nick G. Skrdlant  
Broomfield, Colo.  
[ntmail@net-shopper.co.uk](mailto:ntmail@net-shopper.co.uk)

At the Orange Bowl my family sat three rows in front of Tommie Frazier and Johnny Rodgers. All during the game they were besieged by autograph seekers and Tennessee hecklers. Both showed they were not only great players, but are great gentlemen. They signed every autograph request and

responded good naturedly to the Tennessee fans.

Steve Gribble  
Port Charlotte, Fla.

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OUT A WINNER WITH THIRD NATIONAL TITLE  
AND 42-17 WIN OVER TENNESSEE IN 1998 ORANGE BOWL



THANKS FOR 25 YEARS, COACH

On Feb. 5, 1998 the good Lord called one of the greatest Nebraska fans home. Mike McGinley, formerly of Fremont, Neb., passed away at his home in Dallas, Texas. "Mad" Mike has been a dedicated member of the North Texas Nebraskans (NT.) alumni chapter, and held numerous Board of Directors positions since 1993. Many of you remember Mike as the "voice of the NTN" through his appearances on the Radio Roundtable and NTN Hotline. His love and dedication to the club and the University of Nebraska were one that could not be measured. It will not be the same without his famous saying, "And as always, Go Big Red." You will be missed my friend.

A memorial will be established at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in Mike's name. Please feel free to send contributions to: Mike McGinley Memorial Fund, P.O. Box 821673, Dallas, TX 75382-1673.

Robert Van Horn  
[Vanro03@mail.cai.com](mailto:Vanro03@mail.cai.com)

I loved to watch Ahman Green tear up defenses at Nebraska, but am saddened to read that he, like too many young athletes, was lured to the NFL early in search of easy money and a short career. Does Green have the tools to play on the next level? Probably. But since he doesn't have the big build up behind him like a Peyton Manning he will be taken late by a team that wants to push the tailbacks it already has.

I think by staying for his final year he would have increased his draft status in addition to possibly breaking Mike Rozier's rushing record. It's too bad to watch another youngster burn out before his time.

Tanner George  
Lincoln, Neb.

Mike McGinley



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PUBLISHER  
Robert Bennett

EDITORIAL & OPERATIONS  
COORDINATOR  
Chris Greer

CONTRIBUTING EDITOR  
Mike Bobcock

GRAPHIC PRODUCTION  
Jeff Cannon

PRODUCTION  
Steve Lansdale, Mario Talkington,  
Allen Verbrugge

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS  
Mark Derowitsch, James Hiale,  
Dennis Dodd, Steve Sipple,  
Nebraska Sports Information Office

CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHERS  
Jon Waller, Doug DeVoe, Al Fuchs,  
J.C. Ridley, Ryan Soderlin, Scott Smith,  
Michael Warren, Joshua Eickmeier

SPORTS MARKETING  
& ADVERTISING DIRECTOR  
Jeff Tudor  
For Advertising Information Call:  
(402) 423-3405

INTERNET MANAGER  
Jason Home

ADVERTISING COORDINATOR  
Danni Usrey

CIRCULATION DIRECTOR  
JoAnn Hinson Leath

CIRCULATION  
Ann Johnston

ACCOUNTING  
Carolyn Rhodes

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**E-Mail Addresses**

Publisher: [huskerspab@xcscx.com](mailto:huskerspab@xcscx.com)  
Editor: [huskersedit@xcscx.com](mailto:huskersedit@xcscx.com)  
Circulation: [huskerscirc@xcscx.com](mailto:huskerscirc@xcscx.com)

## Early Risers

**D**ahrran Diedrick is getting a headstart on the others in his freshman recruiting class.

The 6-foot, 208-pound I-back from Scarborough, Ontario, Canada, is enrolled for second-semester classes at Nebraska and will be able to participate in spring practice.

Diedrick accelerated his schedule at Cedarbrae Collegiate High School in suburban Toronto in order to get the headstart. Three days after his high school graduation, he began classes at Nebraska.

He arrived in Lincoln on Jan. 11, his 19th birthday. "My No. 1 goal, without telling a lie, would be to start (as a freshman)," Diedrick told the *Omaha World-Herald*.

Opportunity at I-back increased when Ahman Green announced he was bypassing his final season of eligibility in order to declare for the NFL draft. Jay Sims also completed his eligibility.

Freshmen Correll Buckhalter and Dan Alexander are the top returnees at I-back from last season. Sophomore DeAngelo Evans, who was forced to take a medical redshirt because of a serious groin-related injury, is expected to be back. A healthy Evans would be the odds-on favorite to start.

There also are other I-back candidates among the freshman scholarship recruits.

In case you're wondering, Diedrick, who was born in Jamaica, has not played ice hockey and he doesn't



**Diedrick got a jump on his goal of starting as a true freshman by enrolling at Nebraska early and participating in pre-winter testing.**

speaking French. Those are among the most-asked questions. He is Nebraska's first scholarship football recruit from Canada.

Diedrick went through strength and conditioning tests in late January, prior to Nebraska's winter conditioning program, scoring 2,265 points on the performance index.

His point total was 17th best among those who were tested.

For the second year in a row,

Alexander had the best performance index total, which is determined by factoring an athlete's weight and his scores in four tests — the 10- and 40-yard dashes; the vertical jump and the pro agility run. The vertical jump is a measure of the athlete's explosiveness.

Alexander, who weighed 239 pounds with five percent body fat, scored 2,808 points. He ran 10 yards in 1.57 seconds, 40 yards in 4.55 seconds, the pro agility drill in 4.01 seconds and jumped 31.5 inches.

Freshman rush end Kyle Vanden Bosch was second on the performance index, with 2,692 points.

Boyd Epley, the director of athletic performance, described the test results as the best they've ever been. As a group, he said, the athletes were the fastest and the most agile ever.

However, he cautioned that although the results were impressive, "you have to take them with a grain of salt and not overreact. Now it's up to the athletes to apply themselves and make progress."

Bobby Newcombe, who was moved from quarterback to wingback three games into his first season at Nebraska, was the fastest at 40 yards among those who tested, running 4.47. He ran the 40 in 4.60 when the freshmen were tested in August. He will return to quarterback in the spring.

Newcombe was fourth on the performance index, with 2,615 points.

More than 140 athletes are expected to participate in winter conditioning. ■

### TOP SCORES IN PRE-WINTER CONDITIONING TESTS

PERFORMANCE INDEX		40-YARD DASH		10-YARD DASH		PRO AGILITY RUN		VERTICAL JUMP	
PLAYER	POINTS	PLAYER	TIME	PLAYER	TIME	PLAYER	TIME (Seconds)	PLAYER	INCHES
Dan Alexander	2,808	Bobby Newcombe	4.47	Khari Reynolds	1.44	Tom Beveridge	3.85	Sean Applegate	36
Kyle Vanden Bosch	2,692	Shevin Wiggins	4.52	Matt Ickes	1.46	Steve Raymond	3.89	Eric Johnson	35.5
Julius Jackson	2,687	Brandon Harrison	4.53	Shevin Wiggins	1.5	Bobby Newcombe	3.92	Demond Finister	35
Bobby Newcombe	2,615	Khari Reynolds	4.54	Bobby Newcombe	1.5	Sean Applegate	3.92	Rod Baker	35
Rod Baker	2,586	Dan Alexander	4.55	Sean Applegate	1.51	Matt Davison	3.95	Dan White	34.5
Steve Raymond	2,555	Ralph Brown	4.59	Demond Finister	1.52	Casey Vanderhoef	3.95	Shevin Wiggins	34
Chad Kelsay	2,496	Eric Johnson	4.59	Steve Raymond	1.53	Erwin Swiney	3.96	Erwin Swiney	34
Sean Applegate	2,471	Matt Ickes	4.59	Jeff Hemje	1.53	Julius Jackson	3.97	Steve Raymond	34
Shevin Wiggins	2,419	Frankie London	4.6	Brandon Harrison	1.56	Billy Haafke	3.98	Dahrran Diedrick	34
Khari Reynolds	2,415	Eric Crouch	4.61	Matt Davison	1.56	Ralph Brown	3.99	Josh Anderson	34





**Scott Frost**

## DRAFT DODGER

Scott Frost showed his versatility at the Hula Bowl All-Star Game at Wailuku, Hawaii, in mid-January, playing offense and defense, as well as covering kickoffs.

Frost led the winning South team to its final touchdown, directing a drive on which he carried four times for 42 yards — the last 7 on a quarterback draw for the score. Sound familiar?

Late in the Hula Bowl game, Frost, who started at safety for Stanford during his sophomore season, played defensive back and nearly intercepted a pass on the North's final series.

Whether Frost's professional future lies on offense or defense has become a popular topic of conversation.

"I don't know that much about Frost, except that he's a nice, good athlete," Green Bay Packer special teams coach Nolan Cromwell told the *Omaha World-Herald*.

"I think the most important thing for that transition is mentally. It takes time to be defensive-minded . . . on offense, especially at quarterback, you can freelance a little bit and get out of the play into something else. But on defense, every man has a job to do and you have to stay with that job." ■

## SOUND BITE

**"There have been more nice things said about me in the last month than there were the preceding 25 years."**

Tom Osborne



# AROUND THE HORN

### WOULD YOU BELIEVE THE TROJANS?

Nebraska has scheduled a home-and-home series with Southern California in football. The Cornhuskers will play USC at the Los Angeles Coliseum on Sept. 16, 2006, with the Trojans coming to Memorial Stadium for a rematch on Sept. 15, 2007.

Nebraska and Southern California have played only twice in football. The Trojans won, 31-21, at Memorial Stadium in 1969. Then the teams tied, 21-21, at the Coliseum in 1970. The Cornhuskers went on to win The Associated Press national championship — the school's first — that season.

Southern California has won eight national championships in football.

### WELL-NAMED

When USC comes to Lincoln in 2007, it will play on **Tom Osborne Field**. The University of Nebraska Board of Regents voted unanimously to name the field at Memorial Stadium in honor of Osborne, whose retirement from coaching the Cornhuskers became official on Feb. 4.

Typically, a five-year wait is required for such an honor to be bestowed. The regents also voted to waive that policy in Osborne's case. Osborne has indicated he would rather the field not be named for him.

Tom Osborne Field/Memorial Stadium is the third building at Nebraska to be named for a former Cornhusker football coach. Schulte Fieldhouse at the north end of Memorial Stadium is named in honor of **Henry F. Schulte**, who coached the football team in 1919 and 1920. "Pa" Schulte also served as an assistant football coach — he worked with the line — and head track and field coach.

The Sports Center, of course, is named in honor of **Bob Devaney**, Osborne's predecessor.

Four other Big 12 football fields carry the names of former coaches.

- Colorado's Folsom Field is named for Fredrick Folsom
- Missouri's Faurot Field is named for Don Faurot
- Oklahoma's Owen Field/Oklahoma Memorial Stadium is named for Bennie Owen

• Texas's Royal-Texas Memorial Stadium is named for Darrell Royal

In addition, Iowa State's Jack Trice Stadium is named for the school's first black football player.

### UPPINGHOUSE WINS MVP AT ALL-STAR CLASSIC

Former Husker All-America midfielder **Kari Uppinghouse** scored a goal from 35 yards to help the Women's NCAA Elite 16 post a 1-1 tie against the Women's W-League Select at the NSCAA/Umbro All-Star Classic in Fort Lauderdale, Fla.

Uppinghouse finished her senior season at Nebraska with 39 points on 16 goals and seven assists to earn a spot on the select squad that featured the nation's best graduating seniors from NCAA Division I-A.

Uppinghouse's performance capped the best career in the four-year history of the Nebraska women's soccer program. She became NU's only first-team All-American in 1996 and was a two-time All-Big 12 Conference midfielder. She is also the Huskers' all-time leading scorer with 104 points on 42 goals and 20 assists. Under her leadership, the Huskers made back-to-back appearances in the 1996 and 1997 NCAA Tournament.

### TOUGH SPRING IN STORE FOR SOCCER SQUAD

After competing the toughest regular-season schedule in school history with an 18-4 record and final No. 7 NSCAA/Umbro national ranking, the Husker soccer team announced an even tougher spring exhibition schedule.

The Huskers, who finished the 1997 season with a 4-3 record against top 16 teams, will play five final top 16 teams in the spring, including each of the four schools that advanced to the 1997 NCAA semifinals.

Nebraska opens the spring season on March 1 at No. 14 Florida. The Gators finished 1997 with a 20-3-1 mark, with two losses to eventual national champion North Carolina. The Gators also lost to the Tar Heels in the 1996 NCAA Tournament.

The Huskers will follow up their battle with the Gators by traveling to No. 4 Santa Clara on March 14 or 15. Nebraska did not face Santa Clara during the 1997 regular season, but the Huskers defeated the Broncos, 2-1, during the 1997 spring season.

On April 15, Nebraska will face No. 3 Notre Dame, a team the Huskers lost to in the second round of the 1997 NCAA Tournament but defeated, 1-0, in Indiana last spring.

The Huskers are scheduled to lock horns with 14-time national champs UNC on April 11 in Chapel Hill before battling 1997 NCAA runner-up Connecticut on April 19, in Storrs, Conn. ■



**Kari Uppinghouse**

## Staying Close To Home Has Championship Feel

*Recruiting services might overlook in-state recruits, but Nebraska's winning tradition proves that to be a mistake*

Nebraska's football recruiting class won't be ranked all that high. It won't be as high as it should be, anyway, given the program's three national championships in the past four seasons.

Such success would seem to demonstrate the Cornhuskers' ability to identify and attract outstanding players. But they won't rank in the nation's top five, and maybe not the top 10.

The recruiting analysts will pay their respects, acknowledging Nebraska's class is "solid," and that one or two on the list are blue-chip quality — DeJuan Groce, for example, they'll say.

By all accounts, Groce, a defensive back from Garfield Heights (St. Edward), Ohio, is the real deal. He is also the only *Parade* magazine prep All-American among the Cornhuskers' 20 scholarship recruits.

He is not, however, the only one worthy of the blue-chip designation.

Nebraska's recruiting classes have rarely been ranked among the nation's best. In part, that's because the Cornhuskers' approach is based entirely on need and substance rather than on form.

"We look at those (national) lists. We subscribe to them. But we do not recruit from them," coach Frank Solich said during a news conference to announce Nebraska's scholarship recruits.

"We recruit from what we see on tape. We recruit from what we see in our camp. That's the way it's been. And that's the way it will continue to be because it has proven successful for us.

"The players we recruited here are the players we saw on tape, that we thought looked like tremendous athletes . . . whose attitude and character, we feel, are right to fit into this pro-

gram."

That isn't to say high-profile high school players wouldn't be a good fit at Nebraska.

There also are tremendous players who signed letters-of-intent with the Cornhuskers who should have been high on the recruiting lists but weren't. It happens that way every season.



**Mike Babcock**

One of the reasons should be obvious after a quick look at this year's class. Nine of Nebraska's scholarship recruits are from in-state high schools. More often

Jon Waller



**Jeremy Slechta was one of only three in-state recruits to receive much attention outside the state's borders.**

than not, that seems to exclude them from the blue-chip lists, if for no other reason than recruiting analysts know little about them.

That is, in part, a function of the state's size. Nebraska's population is a little over 1.6 million.

The quantity of high school football players is limited. The quality, however, is not.

Randy Stella, a 6-foot-2, 200-pound linebacker from Omaha (Benson), is a case in point. He also played running back, rushing for 761 yards and 11 touchdowns, despite missing most of three games with an ankle sprain. "His feeling is, he could come in here and play running back," said Solich. "And I don't doubt that one bit. He could be the type of running back you're look-

ing for."

If Stella were from a major metropolitan area, he'd be a bona-fide blue-chipper. "You're hard-pressed to look at film and find people around the country that match Randy," said Solich.

The same is true of Jeremy Slechta, a 6-foot-5, 255-pound lineman from the Omaha area, specifically, Papillion-LaVista High School. Slechta appears to be talented enough and mature enough "that we will give him an early look in terms of helping us in the defensive line," Solich said.

Should a player who is considered good enough to earn "an early look" from the defending national champion be regarded as a blue-chip prospect? Such a question answers itself.

The state of Nebraska has produced outstanding players. Four of the Cornhuskers' eight Outland Trophies and one of their two Heisman Trophies have been won by Nebraskans.

Nine offensive starters on Nebraska's 1997 national championship team were homegrown, as were 21 of the top 46 — including kickers. By comparison, only six Tennessee starters were homegrown, even though Tennessee's population is over 5 million, or more than three times that of Nebraska.

The Cornhuskers' 1995 national champions had 10 in-state starters. And the 1994 team had nine. Such numbers dramatically underscore the importance of keeping the best players at home.

That and the walk-on program have been the foundation on which Nebraska's success was built during Tom Osborne's 25 seasons as coach. By all indications, Solich doesn't intend to change.

Recruiting analysts might consider nine of 20 scholarship recruits from Nebraska too many.

But as recent history has shown, that might be about right. ■



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Attending Husker summer camps allowed Papillion-LaVista's Jeremy Slechta to get to know the coaching staff — which ultimately was the deciding factor in his pick of Nebraska over Michigan.

# MAKING CONTACT



**No school does a better job of targeting recruits sooner and more efficiently than Nebraska. That recruiting system may have saved this year's class.**

**By James Hale**





The Nebraska juggernaut continues in 1998. The Cornhuskers not only secured another national championship, but also put together another recruiting class that maintained the Nebraska standard of high quality.

Once again, the Huskers had most of the class committed before the Christmas break, and all but a couple of those commitments stuck with the Huskers. Not even the surprise retirement of Tom Osborne slowed down the Husker recruiting machine. In fact, that announcement turned out to be a positive for the Huskers, as Osborne stayed on the staff through the recruiting season to help his successor, Frank Solich, put together his first class.

## Football Recruiting Recap

The Cornhuskers' top two priorities this year were to sign running backs and defensive linemen, and the Huskers may have signed the best group in the country at each position. The Huskers have developed a knack for getting the specific player they need at a certain position, or at least another player just like him.

No school does a better job of targeting who they want sooner and more efficiently than Nebraska. It's been this way for the past four or five years, and this pattern has helped the Cornhuskers maintain a superior program — on the field, and in recruiting.

It all starts in the summer at the Nebraska football camp. While most programs are struggling to get 500 athletes to their camps, the Huskers often manage to get close to 3,000 athletes in Lincoln every summer, including some upcoming seniors who happen to be some of the best high school football players in the country. Almost all the athletes the Huskers signed from Nebraska high schools this season attended the Nebraska summer camp.

This gives the Huskers a tremendous advantage. For three days Nebraska's coaching staff gets an opportunity to work with a top recruit, without violating NCAA rules, and test and evaluate his abilities. At the same time, that player gets to see the Nebraska football program up-close. It's the best recruiting tool in college football today, and the Huskers match Penn State, Michigan, Notre Dame,

Florida State and Florida among the top college football powers that use their summer football camps as great recruiting tools.

A Cornhusker strategy every year is to identify the top Nebraska high school players a year ahead of time and offer them scholarships in the summer. Since most Nebraska high school players dream of playing for Nebraska anyway, the theory is that if they know they have a scholarship, then they will commit to the Huskers and get their recruiting over with by rejecting visits to any other schools. This strategy has been very successful for the Huskers over the years, and this year was no exception.

Nebraska's first commitment came in July from All-America running back DeAntae Grixby of Omaha (Central), Neb. Grixby, who said he grew up a Nebraska fan, had attended the Husker summer camp and came from the same high school that produced two of the most famous and successful running backs ever to play at Nebraska. Ahman Green and Calvin Jones both had great careers at Nebraska after playing their high school ball at Central — the school that also produced former Kansas and Chicago Bears star Gale Sayers — and Grixby is regarded as the next great running back to emerge from Central.

It was no surprise then, when over the summer, Grixby announced that his recruiting was over, because he was going to Nebraska.



"I have known where I was going to play college football since I was a little kid," Grixby said. "There is no sense prolonging this decision when Nebraska has offered a scholarship and I know where I want to go. This way, if I commit to them, I tie up a scholarship for myself, be up front with all the other colleges recruiting me so they don't hurt their recruiting and I get to concentrate on playing football instead of the recruiting process. I was glad to get recruiting out of the way, and just happy my dream came true."

Two other in-state All-America honorees followed during the summer. Defensive end Chris Kelsey of Auburn, Neb., followed his brother, Chad, and committed early to the Huskers, while offensive lineman Nate Kolterman of Seward, Neb., didn't waste any time either. Kolterman said he would have committed before his junior season if the Huskers had offered.

"Yeah, I have known where I wanted to go to school for some time," Kolterman said. "There wasn't any use going through a recruiting process, because as soon as Nebraska offered me a scholarship, I accepted."

The Cornhuskers showcased their recruiting strategy in the recruitment of running back Dahrran Diedrick of Scarborough, Ontario, Canada. Nebraska first saw Diedrick in summer camp and knew they were watching a special player. If Diedrick had been playing in the United States, he likely would have been ranked among the top 100 players in the country. By going to the Nebraska summer camp, Solich got a chance to get to know Diedrick. That relationship eventually led to a September commitment from a player many schools didn't even know about.

"Without question, my relationship with Coach Solich was the big reason I chose Nebraska," Diedrick said. "I didn't know a thing about any of the college programs in the United States, but my coach recommended that I go to summer camp in Nebraska. I got to know Coach Solich there, and all about Nebraska. I liked it so much that I committed to them, despite the fact I hadn't seen any other program. I just knew they were the program for me."

Diedrick eventually would consider

five other programs, which didn't please the Husker coaching staff. However, after turning down Maryland, Michigan, Ohio State and Syracuse, Diedrick enrolled at Nebraska and will go through spring football.

In October, the Cornhuskers would earn commitments from three more players from Nebraska high schools — defensive end Jeremy Slechta of LaVista (Papillion LaVista); tight end Aaron Golliday, of York; and tight end Jon Bowling of Lincoln (Southeast). Each announced his commitment within a 13-day period.

In a couple of weeks, the Huskers had solved their tight end needs and picked up an All-America defensive lineman. Bowling had a great senior year and was named state Offensive Player of the Year by the *Omaha World-Herald* and state Player of the Year by *USA Today*. Slechta and Golliday would have been national recruits, but they made it known they weren't interested in visiting anywhere else.

Eight commitments were in the books, and it wasn't even December. All but one of the commitments were from in-state athletes, but that didn't

considering five schools, including Nebraska. Defensive lineman Ryan Pickett of Zephyrhills, Fla., had Nebraska and Florida State at the top of his list. Cornerback Robert Cromartie of Atlanta (Douglass), Ga., had the Huskers among his final five. Of these players, only Groce ended up signing with the Cornhuskers.

After signing the top two run/pass quarterbacks in the country — Bobby Newcombe and Eric Crouch — in 1997, the Cornhuskers didn't have to sign a quarterback in their 1998 class. However, if a great one came along they certainly would have taken him. Arnaz Battle of Shreveport (Byrd), La., was the second-rated run/pass quarterback in the country and had the Cornhuskers in the hunt, along with Georgia, Oklahoma, Tennessee and Notre Dame, his lifelong favorite and the school with which he eventually signed. Jason Thomas of Compton (Dominguez), Calif., committed to USC during the summer, but he wavered after he learned that the Trojans were looking at other quarterbacks and especially after head coach John Robinson got fired. The Huskers called just to make sure Thomas wanted

to stay in California, which he did by signing with the Trojans.

Linebacker Howard Clark of Pennsauken, N.J., reportedly was considering Nebraska, Florida State and Miami before signing with the Hurricanes, while safety Derrick Ross was leaning to Clemson over Nebraska.

Offensive lineman Wes Cody of Fremont (Bergan), Neb., was the first to commit to the Huskers in November. Cody said he would have committed earlier, but he was just waiting for Nebraska to offer a scholarship.

"I have always wanted to play at Nebraska, and I would have committed any time they wanted me to," Cody said. "I was just waiting for them to call to give me the word, and once they did, it was a done deal."

Nebraska's first reach into Texas came in November. It was a bit of a surprise when cornerback/running back Michael Demps of Fort Worth (Dunbar), committed to the Huskers. Demps wasn't on most preseason lists of the top 100 players in Texas, but he had a very impressive senior season.



**"I have always wanted to play at Nebraska. I was just waiting for them to call to give me the word, and once they did, it was a done deal."**  
— Wes Cody

mean the Huskers weren't recruiting nationwide. In fact, Nebraska actively was recruiting 18 of the top 100 players in the country.

Linebacker Robert Thomas of San Diego (Imperial), Calif., was ranked by many among the top five players in the nation and had the Huskers in a battle with Notre Dame and UCLA. Offensive linemen Mike Saffer of Tucson (Sabino), Ariz., and Mike Pearson of Seffner (Armwood), Fla., both reportedly were considering Nebraska. Cornerback DeJuan Groce, of Lakewood (St. Edward), Ohio, was



"I was really surprised at first when Nebraska offered me (a scholarship)," Demps said. "However, I wasn't going to lose out on an opportunity to go to Nebraska. Once they offered, I jumped on it and never looked back."

Nebraska's goal was to have 20 commitments before the start of the new year. The Huskers had nine heading into December, and had yet to have a weekend of official visits.

Nebraska got off to a great start in December with a commitment from defensive end Justin Smith of Sherman, Texas, ranked by many among the top 30 players in Texas.

However, December wasn't a normal month for the Cornhuskers. Once again, they put themselves into a position to play for a national title, but Osborne's announcement of his impending retirement shocked almost everyone.

The Huskers were getting ready to play for a national title and recruiting was right on schedule, yet the man many consider the top coach in college football said he was stepping down. But he said he wouldn't officially retire until Feb., 4, which happened to be signing day. Osborne said he was still going to recruit, still going to hit the road and explain that the Husker program was going to be OK.

"I just wanted to let the recruits know that we weren't going to miss a beat with Frank in charge," Osborne said. "Our coaching staff was staying intact, with the exception of me, but nothing drastic was going to change. I wanted to visit with as many recruits as possible to let them know that the Nebraska football program wasn't going to miss a beat."

Husker coaches immediately hit the road to tell recruits of Osborne's retirement. Osborne hit the road, too. Nebraska had two recruiting weekends in December, and Osborne was very involved with both. Rival coaches hoped that Osborne's retirement might slow down the Huskers, but it turned out to have the opposite effect. The Huskers hauled in eight commitments during the remaining days in December, helping them reach their goal of 20 commitments before signing day.

From Indiana, running back Shawn McGann of Granger (Penn), picked Nebraska over Notre Dame and Michigan State. From Oklahoma, the Huskers landed defensive tackle Jason Lohr of Jenks, and All-America kicker Josh Brown of Foyil. The Huskers beat

## 1998 NEBRASKA SIGNEES

PLAYER	POS	HT	WT	HIGH SCHOOL
Demoine Adams	RE	6-2	222	Pine Bluff, Ark.
Jon Bowling	TE	6-4	215	Lincoln (Southeast), Neb.
Josh Brown	PK/ATH	6-1	180	Foyil, Okla.
Jon Clanton	DL	6-2	281	Glendale (Centennial), Ariz.
Wes Cody	OL	6-3	265	Fremont (Bergan), Neb.
Keyuo Craver	DB	6-0	180	Harleton, Texas
Mike Demps	DB	5-11	190	Fort Worth (Dunbar), Texas
Dahrran Diedrick	IB	6-1	200	Scarborough (Cedarbrae Coll. Inst.) Ontario, Canada
Aaron Golliday	TE	6-5	235	York, Neb.
DeAntae Grixby	IB/DB	5-10	180	Omaha (Central), Neb.
DeJuan Groce	DB	5-10	180	Garfield Heights (St. Edward), Ohio
Chris Kelsay	RE	6-4	230	Auburn, Neb.
Nate Kolterman	OL	6-4	300	Seward, Neb.
Jason Lohr	DL	6-2	270	Tulsa (Jenks), Okla.
Shawn McGann	WB	6-0	190	Granger (Penn), Ind.
Matt Shook	OL	6-3	285	Medina, Ohio
Jeremy Slechta	DL	6-5	255	LaVista (Papillion-LaVista), Neb.
Justin Smith	RE	6-5	240	Sherman, Texas
Randy Stella	LB	6-2	196	Omaha (Benson), Neb.
Tony Tata	LB	6-2	240	Honolulu (St. Louis), Hawaii
Wilson Thomas	WR	6-6	195	Omaha (North), Neb.

Kansas State for Lohr and Oklahoma for Brown and continued their annual raid on the Sooner state.

Nebraska would hurt the Sooners again when they earned a commitment from running back Keyuo Craver of Harleton, Texas. Craver left Norman a week earlier heavily favoring the Sooners. But after visiting Nebraska the following week, he said that there was no comparison, even though the Huskers said they plan to use him as a defensive back.

"When I went to Nebraska, I just couldn't believe how special it was," Craver said. "Oklahoma was nice, but it just didn't compare. Nebraska is the top program in the country right now, and when they gave me an opportunity, I had to be a part of it."

Back at their summer camp the Huskers saw wide receiver/defensive end Wilson Thomas of Omaha (North), Neb., post the second-highest score ever on their athletic achievement test. (The only other player ever to crack 2,000 points was former Husker star Ahman Green.) After watching Thomas throughout his senior season, the Cornhuskers felt he was too good an athlete to let get away, and offered him their 15th scholarship.

Nebraska always recruits well in Arizona, and the Huskers landed a gem before the new year. Defensive tackle John Clanton of Glendale (Centennial), Ariz., is regarded as one of the top 10 athletes in the state and turned down Washington, Oregon and Illinois to sign with Nebraska.

Nebraska also earned a verbal commitment from running back Frank Strong of Stockton (Franklin), Calif. Strong, who backed out on an earlier commitment he made to USC, ended up reversing his decision again and signed with the Trojans. Outside line-

backer Demoine Adams of Pine Bluff, Ark., also chose Nebraska right before the new year. Arkansas and Ole Miss tried to convince Adams to remain in the Southeast Conference, but Adams signed with the Huskers.

All-America safety Larry Foote of Detroit (Pershing), Mich., chose Michigan over Nebraska.

Groce would jump the first weekend in January and leave Ohio State high and dry. Outside linebacker Randy Stella of Omaha (Benson), Neb., wasn't far behind. Stella had hoped to take some visits and could have taken all five, but the lure to become a Husker was just too great.

"I have really thought about taking all five visits, but when I starting reading about Nebraska's class being put together, I thought I should go ahead and join, too," he said. "Nebraska is the best program in the country and I have wanted to play there all my life. They have been great with me throughout recruiting and I just decided to get recruiting over with."

As signing day approached, the Huskers went back to St. Louis High in Honolulu for the second straight year. After signing Dominic Raiola last season, the Huskers landed his prep teammate Tony Tata.

Signing day didn't bring any big surprises, but the Huskers didn't really need any. Adams signed with Nebraska, but the Huskers expected that. Nebraska did sign offensive lineman Matt Shook five days after signing day, prying him away from Miami of Ohio.

The 1998 recruiting season was a typical recruiting year for Nebraska.

By targeting the players they wanted well in advance, the Cornhuskers were able to get many of the players on their wish list. ■

## Demoine ADAMS



**HEIGHT: 6-2**  
**WEIGHT: 222**  
**SPEED: 4.5**  
**DOB: Aug. 17, 1980**

### RUSH END/LINEBACKER

**SCHOOL:** Pine Bluff, Ark.

**OFFENSE/DEFENSE RUN:** Wishbone/Split 4

**1997 HONORS:** All-America (*SuperPrep*); honorable mention All-USA (*USA Today*); All-Southwest Region (*SuperPrep*); All-State (*Arkansas Gazette*); Gridiron Great (*SuperPrep*); Arkansas Defensive Player of the Year (*Pine Bluff Commercial News*)

**1997 RECORD/PLAYOFFS:** 10-2/Lost in the quarterfinals

**OTHER SPORTS:** Track

**HOBBIES & INTERESTS:** Weightlifting; working (assistant manager at a movie theater); reading the Bible

#### HIGH SCHOOL COACH — MARION GLOVER:

"He played with a great deal of intensity for us this year. He has a lot of ability, especially at rush end, where I project he will play. He's got good speed and a knack for getting to the quarterback. He's got good size, and I don't think there's any question he'll get bigger."

#### FRANK SOLICH:

"Demoine is a very physical, explosive player. When you watch him on film, you see a player who can get from point A to point B very quickly. That is something we have gotten very accustomed to in our rush ends at Nebraska, putting pressure on the passer. He will fit into our system tremendously well."

#### WHY DEMOINE CHOSE NEBRASKA:

"When I was a junior, they invited me to their camp, which I thought was a pretty big deal, because they're one of the top teams in the country. I proved myself at the camp, and tried to have a successful senior season. When they offered me a scholarship, I knew that was where I wanted to go. It upset me when Coach Osborne retired, but they had me up there again and told me that all the coaches were still going to be there, and things would be the same, so I stayed with Nebraska. At my high school, we have a winning tradition, and Nebraska is the same at the college level."

#### CAPSULE

The third Arkansas native to join the Huskers (after Eric Warfield and Derek Allen), Adams frustrated some observers of Nebraska's recruiting effort by committing to Nebraska, and then hesitating while entertaining thoughts of Ole Miss and Arkansas. Adams gives the Huskers another tremendous athlete with legitimate 4.5 speed in the 40-yard dash and a bench press of over 400 pounds. Over the past two seasons, Adams had 193 tackles and 23.5 sacks, and his team compiled a record of 33-5. Adams is the president of the Pine Bluff HS Spanish Club.

**SELECTED NEBRASKA OVER:** Arkansas, Ole Miss, Florida State, LSU

**Son of Ollie Johnson and Ralph Adams**  
**Grandson of Edna Adams**

## Jon BOWLING



**HEIGHT: 6-4**  
**WEIGHT: 215**  
**SPEED: 4.8**  
**DOB: Oct. 15, 1979**

### TIGHT END

**SCHOOL:** Lincoln (Southeast), Neb.

**OFFENSE/DEFENSE RUN:** I-Formation/Multiple 50 front

**1997 HONORS:** Offensive Player of the Year (*Lincoln Journal Star*); offensive captain (*Omaha World-Herald*); Nebraska State Player of the Year (Gatorade Circle of Champions); Nebraska Player of the Year (*USA Today*); All-Midlands (*SuperPrep*, National Recruiting Advisor); All-State (*Omaha World-Herald*, *Lincoln Journal Star*)

**1997 RECORD/PLAYOFFS:** 13-0/State champions

**OTHER SPORTS:** Basketball (averaged 14.8 points, eight rebounds and six assists per game)

**HOBBIES & INTERESTS:** Basketball

#### HIGH SCHOOL COACH — CHUCK MIZERSKI:

"You have to have a lot of ability even to be considered by the University of Nebraska, and there's no question that Jon is that kind of an athlete. But he's also got great leadership qualities. He's very intelligent, he's got strong family support and he's an exceptional person. That, plus his desire, gives him a chance to make a contribution at the next level."

#### FRANK SOLICH:

"We had Jon in camp, so we know he is a super athlete who not only can be a great blocker, but he has the speed and agility to get deep on pass patterns, as well. He will add some weight in our program, and he's a very aggressive athlete. He's had great success at Southeast and he received a lot of attention throughout the state and really around the country. We think he will be a tremendous force for us."

#### WHY JON CHOSE NEBRASKA:

"I know the coaching staff and the history. I went to the Nebraska camp and sort of grew up a Huskers fan. If they made me an offer, I knew that's where I was going to go. (On Osborne's retirement) I thought about switching, but only very briefly. I was confused, but some of the assistant coaches came to visit. They reassured me that the program would be the same. I kind of always wanted to go to Nebraska. (On his decision to focus on football instead of basketball) After spending the summer traveling (playing basketball), I've seen some of the better players in nation, seen what they can do. I figure I have a better chance for more success playing football, and a better chance for early playing time."

#### CAPSULE

Bowling came into his own during his senior year playing tight end, linebacker and wide receiver. He caught 27 passes for 551 yards and two touchdowns. Defensively, he returned five interceptions for touchdowns. A physical player, Bowling is regarded as an excellent blocker at the line of scrimmage.

**SELECTED NEBRASKA OVER:** Purdue, Wyoming, Iowa State, Michigan, Colorado State

**Son of Karen and Charles Bowling**



## Josh BROWN



**HEIGHT: 6-1**  
**WEIGHT: 180**  
**SPEED: 4.45**  
**DOB: April 29, 1979**

### PLACE-KICKER

**SCHOOL:** Foyil, Okla.

**OFFENSE/DEFENSE RUN:** Power-I/3-2-3 (Eight-man football)

**1997 HONORS:** All-America (*SuperPrep*, *PrepStar*, National Recruiting Advisor); honorable mention All-USA (*USA Today*); District Offensive Player of the Year (third year in a row); County Most Valuable Player; All-State (*SuperPrep*, Coaches Association, *Tulsa World*, *Daily Oklahoman*)

**1997 RECORD/PLAYOFFS:** 12-1/Lost in state semifinals

**OTHER SPORTS:** Basketball (shooting guard — 16 points per game); Track (state high jump champion; wants to jump for Nebraska track team)

**HOBBIES & INTERESTS:** Singing (commercials for radio stations, weddings, etc.); hanging out with friends; sports

#### HIGH SCHOOL COACH — RICK ANTLE:

"Josh is a young man who is really special, and I'm glad he's going to a special school. He showed up here as an eighth grader, and I made him the team manager. At the time, we always went for two (points after a touchdown), because we never worked on kicking until game day. But there he was before a game, just kicking the snot out of the ball, hitting 40-yards — in eighth grade. He really has a booming leg. His choice was a no-brainer, because Nebraska has such a fine program. I told him to pick a school where he'd enjoy living for the next five years, and Lincoln is such a great town. For him to go 70 yards on a kickoff was not a rarity. When he gets into that Nebraska off-season (conditioning) program, he could get up to 200 pounds."

#### FRANK SOLICH:

"Josh just doesn't view himself as a kicker. He's a guy who played eight-man football at Foyil, and also played I-back and safety. I believe Josh has the attitude that he could come in here and play on the offensive or defensive side of the ball. You really like that approach in your kicker, to have that kind of confidence in his athletic ability other than just running out there and kicking the ball."

#### WHY JOSH CHOSE NEBRASKA:

"Nebraska has the technology, equipment and facilities to allow me to develop to my best. I also like the coaching staff, and the stability of the coaching staff. I'm really into FCA (Fellowship of Christian Athletes), and Coach Osborne and (Nebraska wide receivers) Coach (Ron) Brown are really into FCA. (On Osborne's decision to step down) Coach Osborne has had that program running so well, for so long, but I don't think it will skip a beat. I certainly understand why he did it, and I have no doubt that I made the right decision."

#### CAPSULE

Ranked among the top three high school kickers in the country. Will wait his turn behind incumbent Kris Brown.

**SELECTED NEBRASKA OVER:** Oklahoma, Florida, Arkansas, Tulsa, New Mexico State, Rice

**Son of Quana and Kenneth Brown**

## Jon CLANTON



**HEIGHT: 6-2**  
**WEIGHT: 281**  
**SPEED: 4.74**  
**DOB: Nov. 16, 1979**

### DEFENSIVE TACKLE

**SCHOOL:** Glendale (Centennial), Ariz.

**OFFENSE/DEFENSE RUN:** Multiple/5-2

**1997 HONORS:** West Valley Conference Defensive Player of the Year; All-Far West Region (*SuperPrep*); All-Region; All-Arizona; chosen to play in North-South All-Star Game

**1997 RECORD/PLAYOFFS:** 5-4-2/Lost in first round

**OTHER SPORTS:** Track (shot put and discus)

**HOBBIES & INTERESTS:** Weightlifting

#### HIGH SCHOOL COACH — RICHIE TAYLOR:

"He's incredibly fast for anyone of any size, let alone for someone who's 6-2, 280. He runs a 4.7, 40-yard dash. He was a standout player for us, the kind of guy that whoever we were playing had to know where he was on the field. He was double-teamed in every game, and practically on every play, and still got 28 tackles-for-loss. Jon is the quickest, strongest and fastest player I have ever coached in 26 years of coaching. For such a big guy, he really moves like a running back. He has a great first step at the line of scrimmage and always seems to have an advantage in leverage. Jon is a real pleasure to work with, and we'll miss him here. We look forward to seeing him play at Nebraska."

#### FRANK SOLICH:

"Jon's height is probably what concerns a lot of people, but it doesn't concern us here at Nebraska. He's a tremendously explosive defensive lineman, who runs the quarter (mile) at 280 pounds and ran it in 51.0 seconds, which is very impressive. He is a big guy who can move. He is a really aggressive player who has blocked five kicks in high school."

#### WHY JON CHOSE NEBRASKA:

"They have really good teachers there. Plus, I got along really well with (wide receivers) Coach (Ron) Brown, who did most of the recruiting with me. It didn't change my mind when Coach Osborne retired, but he wasn't going to coach my position, anyway. I knew Nebraska was where I wanted to go."

#### CAPSULE

Despite often facing multiple blockers, Clanton still managed to register 104 tackles (67) solo, 9.5 sacks, forced six fumbles and recovered three fumbles, had three blocked punts and two blocked extra points. Clanton, who has been timed at 11.3 in the 100-meter dash, should fit in perfectly at defensive tackle for the Cornhuskers.

**SELECTED NEBRASKA OVER:** UCLA, Arizona State, San Diego State, Nevada

**Son of Denise Ellert and Jody Clanton**

## Wes CODY



**HEIGHT: 6-3**  
**WEIGHT: 265**  
**SPEED: 5.0**  
**DOB: March 23, 1980**

### OFFENSIVE LINEMAN

**SCHOOL:** Fremont (Bergan), Neb.

**OFFENSE/DEFENSE RUN:** I-Formation/4-3

**1997 HONORS:** All-Big 12 Area; All-Region (National Recruiting Advisor, *SuperPrep*); All-State (*Omaha World-Herald*); All-Class C-2 (*Omaha World-Herald*); All-Area; All-Conference; Super State Team (*Lincoln Journal Star*)

**1997 RECORD/PLAYOFFS:** 7-3/Lost in second round

**HOBBIES & INTERESTS:** Weightlifting

#### HIGH SCHOOL COACH — LARRY MARTIN:

"Wes is very quick, explosive and very strong for a player his age. With Nebraska's training and weightlifting program, he should excel in a couple of years. Wes has a great heart, and is a super competitor. His desire to succeed is as big as his body. He's been a silent leader with his tremendous work ethic, both on and off the field, and especially in the weight room. He's very mobile for his size, very quick off the ball. He puts in 100 percent on every play. In short, he's just the kind of athlete who should fit in well at Nebraska."

#### FRANK SOLICH:

"Wes is typical of the type of offensive linemen that we have gotten over the years from Nebraska who usually turn out to be great players for us. He's a very aggressive lineman and I believe he will be able to do all the pulling that we want him to do in the future, whether he is a guard or a tackle."

#### WHY WES CHOSE NEBRASKA:

"It's the best program in the nation, and they have a tradition at Nebraska of developing great offensive linemen. I've been told about the work ethic, and seen the facilities. I took (an unofficial) visit to Kansas State, and everything there seemed second-rate. The linemen were big, but at Nebraska, they were all beefed up and strong."

#### CAPSULE

Cody is exactly the type of lineman with which the Huskers have had so much past success. He arrives in Lincoln with great size, strength and quickness. A three-year starter at Bergan, Cody is remarkably strong, benching 405 pounds, and squatting 550. A dominant player as a senior, Cody racked up 112 tackles (52 solo), 11 sacks and 35 tackles-for-losses.

**SELECTED NEBRASKA OVER:** Michigan, Wyoming, Kansas, Kansas State, Colorado State, New Mexico State

**Son of Marge and Bill Cody**

## Keyuo CRAVER



**HEIGHT: 6-0**  
**WEIGHT: 180**  
**SPEED: 4.4**  
**DOB: Aug. 22, 1980**

### DEFENSIVE BACK

**SCHOOL:** Harleton, Texas

**OFFENSE/DEFENSE RUN:** Wing-T/6-3

**1997 HONORS:** District 18-2A Co-Most Valuable Player; All-State; All-Southwest Region (*SuperPrep*); All-East Texas; East Texas Offensive Most Valuable Player; National Honor Society

**1997 RECORD/PLAYOFFS:** 10-2/Lost in the second round

**OTHER SPORTS:** Basketball (guard); Track (triple jump — two-time state champion, 200-meter dash. Wants to do triple jump at Nebraska)

**HOBBIES & INTERESTS:** Basketball; track; reading; church; spending time with family

#### HIGH SCHOOL COACH — SAM WILLIS:

"He carried the ball for 3,000 yards and 50 touchdowns (this year), so that speaks for itself as far as what he was able to do for our team. He's a super individual as well as a gifted athlete — just one of those kids you'd adopt. He's got good size and strength, but he's just 17, so he's still growing. Keyuo is a tremendous young man, and I'm not talking about his athletic ability."

#### FRANK SOLICH:

"We will start Keyuo at cornerback, despite the fact that he was a great running back in high school. A great track guy, Keyuo has the kind of speed you want at the cornerback position, but he also has pretty good size, which means he can come up and jam people at the line of scrimmage to keep them from releasing."

#### WHY KEYUO CHOSE NEBRASKA:

"I prayed a lot about it, and my heart let me know that Nebraska was where I really needed to be. I got along great with the players — I like being around all those champions. The coaches were great, very humble. At first I thought it would be a hard decision. I really liked Oklahoma, but I just had a whole different feeling at Nebraska. (On Osborne's retirement) The other schools that were recruiting me tried to make a big deal out of that, but it didn't change my mind at all. Coach Solich has been coaching under "Coach O" for about 20 years, so everything will be the same as it is now. They (the Huskers) told me they don't want me to redshirt. They said they want to get me on the field, whether it's as a defensive back, running back, wingback, whatever. I'll play whatever they want me to."

#### CAPSULE

Craver's 3,024 rushing yards and 50 touchdowns are the second-best national single-season totals ever. He averaged over 11 yards per carry and had 10 games of more than 200 yards.

**SELECTED NEBRASKA OVER:** Texas, Texas A&M, Florida, Texas Tech, Oklahoma, Penn State, Northwestern, UCLA

**Son of Kathy and Steve Craver**



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**MASTERS  
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YOUNG**  
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**BIG 12  
CHAMPIONSHIPS**  
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**MEN:**

**NEW MEXICO  
W/OKLAHOMA**  
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**OHIO STATE**  
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## Mike DEMPS



**HEIGHT: 5-11**  
**WEIGHT: 190**  
**SPEED: 4.3**  
**DOB: Sept. 16, 1979**

### DEFENSIVE BACK

**SCHOOL:** Fort Worth (Dunbar), Texas  
**OFFENSE/DEFENSE RUN:** I-Formation/4-3  
**1997 HONORS:** All-America (*SuperPrep*); Texas Offensive Player of the Year (Gridiron Greats); Superstar Team; All-Southwest Region (*PrepStar*); All-Area (*Fort Worth Star-Telegram*), Who's Who All-Star Team; National Top 100 (*The Dallas Morning News*); Texas Top 100 (*Fort Worth Star-Telegram*)  
**1997 RECORD/PLAYOFFS:** 4-6  
**OTHER SPORTS:** Track (4x100 relay)  
**HOBBIES & INTERESTS:** Running track; lifting weights; going out and having fun

#### HIGH SCHOOL COACH — BOB JONES:

"He played tailback for us and gained over 1,300 yards and scored 20 touchdowns in eight games. I think Nebraska will look at him in the defensive backfield. He never played secondary for us, but he has great speed — he runs a 4.3 — and he is a big, strong physical kid. He has the athletic ability of a tailback, and I don't think he'll have any trouble with the transition to defense."

#### FRANK SOLICH:

"Mike is a great speed guy who has been timed (electronically) at 4.39 in the 40. Without question, he will be a corner-back for us. He also has excelled at running back, but he will be an excellent defensive back for us"

#### WHY MIKE CHOSE NEBRASKA:

"Because of the overall statistics — the football, the academics. I wasn't going to the college for just Coach Osborne. I always wanted to go to Nebraska. With the assistant moving up and no other coaches leaving, it will still be a great program. Nebraska always ends up in the top five (teams in the nation), and usually No. 1. They give me the best chance to play on a national championship team."

#### CAPSULE

Demps emerged from the shadow of his much more heralded Dunbar teammate (and University of Tennessee signee) Willie Miles to become one of the most sought after recruits in the state of Texas. In large part because of his blistering speed, Demps was recruited by the Cornhuskers to play in the secondary, despite the fact that he rushed for 1,346 yards and 20 touchdowns in his senior season. As a member of the Dunbar secondary, Demps had five interceptions. Demps is a six-time honor roll member who has said he would like to major in business administration at Nebraska. He also has said he would like to run on the track team for the Cornhuskers.

**SELECTED NEBRASKA OVER:** UCLA, Kansas State, Minnesota, TCU, Texas A&M, Michigan, Virginia, Texas

**Son of Shirley Demps and Larry Johnson**

## Dahrran DIEDRICK



**HEIGHT: 6-1**  
**WEIGHT: 200**  
**SPEED: 4.4**  
**DOB: Nov. 1, 1979**

### RUNNING BACK

**SCHOOL:** Scarborough (Cedarbrae Collegiate Institute), Ontario, Canada  
**OFFENSE/DEFENSE RUN:** Pro set/3-6  
**1997 HONORS:** Scarborough (Canada) Athlete of the Decade; All-State  
**1997 RECORD/PLAYOFFS:** 9-1/Lost in All-Ontario championship game  
**OTHER SPORTS:** Rugby; Track (100-meter dash, 4x100 relay); wrestling (heavyweight)  
**HOBBIES & INTERESTS:** Table tennis; video games

#### HIGH SCHOOL COACH — RICK BURKE:

"He was a leader on our team — he'll help out anybody. They're looking at him as a big, big runner, but the thing I always liked about him is that he's a devastating blocker. He's got the right size, and if he came back and told me the people at Nebraska didn't think he was in good shape, I'd faint."

#### FRANK SOLICH:

"Dahrran is a young man who already is here at Nebraska, having enrolled (in January). He's got good size, and he is a very aggressive, hard-nosed style of runner who could carry the ball 25 to 35 times per game. He played in about 18 straight games within the Canadian prep system, and he was the main ball carrier in all those games. He is almost like a professional in terms of his ability to hold up and remain healthy. He's a great addition to our corps of I-backs, and I look forward to working with him. He will have an advantage by enrolling early, in that he can go through winter conditioning and go through spring football."

#### WHY DAHRRAN CHOSE NEBRASKA:

"I picked Nebraska because I liked Coach Solich. He has been the one recruiting me, and he always has been straight with me. The Nebraska tradition of rushing the football is the best in the country, and I want to be the next great Nebraska tailback. Nebraska has a winning tradition and is always playing for the national title. That is something that sold me."

#### CAPSULE

Diedrick is the first Canadian to earn a football scholarship at Nebraska, and the third Canadian ever (joining Terris Chorney and Peter Buchanan) to play for the Huskers. Rated by many as the No. 1 player in all of Canada, many think Diedrick would have made most national top 100 lists in the United States if he had played south of the border. Diedrick rushed for 1,886 yards in his school's nine-game regular season, and then picked up another 1,386 (and 14 touchdowns) with a summer all-star team. Tremendous blend of power and pure speed. Diedrick was born in Jamaica.

**SELECTED NEBRASKA OVER:** Maryland, Ohio State, Michigan, Syracuse

**Son of Karen Moulton and Kenneth Diedrick**

## Aaron GOLLIDAY



**HEIGHT: 6-5**  
**WEIGHT: 235**  
**SPEED: 4.9**  
**DOB: Dec. 3, 1979**

### TIGHT END

**SCHOOL:** York, Neb.

**OFFENSE/DEFENSE RUN:** I-Formation/5-2

**1997 HONORS:** All-Nebraska (*Omaha World-Herald*); Super State (*Lincoln Journal Star*); All-Big 12 Region (National Recruiting Advisor, *PrepStar*); All-Conference; Co-Player of the Year (*Lincoln Journal Star*); honorable mention All-USA (*USA Today*); Nebraska Top 24 Players (*Omaha World-Herald*)

**1997 RECORD/PLAYOFFS:** 8-3/ Lost in quarterfinals

**OTHER SPORTS:** Basketball (averaged 15 points and nine rebounds per game); Track (shot put, discus, high jump)

**HOBBIES & INTERESTS:** Watching TV; playing other sports

#### HIGH SCHOOL COACH — RANDY CORDES:

"I don't know how you could go wrong going to a school like Nebraska. Aaron did some receiving for us, but we were short on running backs, so most of the time we played him there. He has very good athletic ability, and he runs great routes. He's a real leader, a good student and a good kid. He plays basketball and baseball and runs track, so he's always active."

#### FRANK SOLICH:

"Aaron is another tight end we had in our camp this summer, and again, we know we have a tremendous athlete who can do a lot of things for us at that position. Aaron is the kind of guy you look for in terms of size, yet he also has great movement. I had a chance to see Aaron play basketball, and he certainly was a very talented three-sport athlete at his school. To show off that athletic ability, he played I-back in high school, and he was a very good one. However, we're going to use him as a tight end."

#### WHY AARON CHOSE NEBRASKA:

"At the time, I really wanted to play for Coach Osborne. But now that he's not there anymore, I still want to be a Cornhusker. I grew up here, and you really can't help but go there if they're interested. I have no problems with Coach Solich, and I think the philosophy will be pretty much the same, so I'm looking forward to it."

#### CAPSULE

Despite playing with the body of a tight end, defensive end or power forward, Golliday was one of the best running backs in Nebraska last year, rushing for 1,923 yards and 21 touchdowns as a senior. A four-year letterman in basketball and track, as well, Golliday at least will start his playing career at Nebraska as a tight end. A broken leg cost Golliday his sophomore season. Student Council President at York, Golliday has said he wants to study political science at Nebraska.

**SELECTED NEBRASKA OVER:** Kansas State, New Mexico State, Stanford

**Son of Jeanne and Monroe Golliday**

## DeAntae GRIXBY



**HEIGHT: 5-10**  
**WEIGHT: 180**  
**SPEED: 4.5**  
**DOB: Jan. 15, 1980**

### I-BACK

**SCHOOL:** Omaha (Central), Neb.

**OFFENSE/DEFENSE RUN:** I-Formation/4-4

**1997 HONORS:** All-America (*SuperPrep*, *PrepStar*); Metro Defensive Back of the Year; All-Division; All-Metro; All-State (*Omaha World-Herald*, *Lincoln Journal Star*); honorable mention USA Today (*USA Today*); All-Big 12 (National Recruiting Advisor); Big 12 Region Super 30 (*PrepStar*)

**1997 RECORD/PLAYOFFS:** 6-5/ Lost in second round

**OTHER SPORTS:** Track (100-meter dash, 4x100 relay)

**HOBBIES & INTERESTS:** Movies; hanging out with friends; parties; dances

#### HIGH SCHOOL COACH — JOE McMENAMIN:

"He was one of our team captains. On defense, he was by far the most aggressive player and a tremendous hitter. From free safety, he was our third-leading tackler. On offense, he led our team in rushing with over 1,000 yards for the second year in a row. He could be just as good on either side of the ball. I think he'd like to start out on offense, but if the coaches decide to move him to the defense, he'd do that well, too."

#### FRANK SOLICH:

"DeAntae is a player who has played on both sides of the ball in high school, but he will play I-back for us. As a safety, he is a tremendous hitter, and he is a very aggressive guy who comes up and supports the run very well. He's the type of guy you really want on your side. He was timed (in the 40) at our camp at 4.37. He could be a great cornerback because of his hitting ability, but we will start him out at I-back, with the idea that he may be looked at on either side of the ball."

#### WHY DeANTAE CHOSE NEBRASKA:

"I live here, and I've always been a die-hard Nebraska fan. At first, I didn't think I'd ever get a chance like this. It's really a dream come true. It was a dream just to go to Nebraska's camp, and to run around on that turf, and then it all erupted. The next thing I know, I'm sitting in Coach Osborne's office, and he's talking to me about playing for Nebraska. When Coach Osborne retired, I was surprised. But he pointed out that Coach Solich has always been there, and he was my coach at camp. (On comparisons to Ahman Green, who went to the same high school): I get that all the time. I'm not as flashy a runner as Ahman is, but I'll get you what you need."

#### CAPSULE

Arrives at Nebraska from the same high school that produced former NU stars Ahman Green and Calvin Jones, as well as former NFL star Gale Sayers. Had 1,102 yards and 11 touchdowns as a senior. Defensively, he racked up 85 tackles (54 solo) last season.

**SELECTED NEBRASKA OVER:** Colorado State, Wyoming, Notre Dame, Michigan, New Mexico State, Montana State, Iowa, Iowa State, Kansas State, Kansas, Texas

**Son of Evelyn and Ronald Grixby**



## DeJuan GROCE



**HEIGHT: 5-10**  
**WEIGHT: 180**  
**SPEED: 4.4**  
**DOB: Feb. 17, 1980**

### DEFENSIVE BACK

**SCHOOL:** Garfield Heights (St. Edward), Ohio

**OFFENSE/DEFENSE RUN:** Multiple/4-3

**1997 HONORS:** All-America (*Parade*, *PrepStar*, *SuperPrep*, National Recruiting Advisor); Best Defensive Back in the Country (*Parade*); National Player of the Week; All-County; All-State (*Cleveland Plain Dealer*); Midwest Region Super 30 (*PrepStar*); No. 4 defensive back prospect in the country (*PrepStar*)

**1997 RECORD:** 6-4

**OTHER SPORTS:** Track (100-meter dash, 200-meter dash)

**HOBBIES & INTERESTS:** Collecting sports cards; listening to music; playing video games

#### HIGH SCHOOL COACH — JIM McQUAIDE:

"As good as he is on defense, the thing he does best is return kicks. He's very team-oriented, and family-oriented. (NU secondary) Coach (George) Darlington and (head) Coach (Frank) Solich did a really good job recruiting him. A year ago, I would have thought Nebraska was too far away, and that he would end up at Ohio State or Michigan or Notre Dame. But they did a good job selling him. He's the best player we've had here. When he gets into the open field, nobody's ever caught him. He's really humble. He honestly seems surprised that so many schools were interested in him. He's a quiet leader, but the other guys really look up to him."

#### FRANK SOLICH:

"DeJuan was thought of as one of the top players in the country, and he comes from a great program where he played cornerback, wide receiver and even returned kicks for them. DeJuan is a great speed guy and was offered (a scholarship) by all the Big 10 schools during his junior year."

#### WHY DEJUAN CHOSE NEBRASKA:

"I felt the most comfortable at Nebraska. The team seemed to be really family-oriented, and the coaches said I'd get a chance to play early. I was sorry to see Coach Osborne retire, but the staff has really stuck together. They didn't go out and hire a whole new coaching staff. It showed that the school really believes in Coach Solich, and I know he'll do a good job. Nebraska gives me a really good opportunity to go to a winning program, and that's the most important thing, as far as football is concerned."

#### CAPSULE

DeJuan Groce (pronounced Duh-WAN) was considered by many to be one of the best pure cover corners in the country. In addition to his duties in the secondary, he also stood out on special teams, taking a pair of kicks all the way back for touchdowns. Recruited by over 40 schools, Groce has been clocked at 21.9 in the 200-meter dash.

**SELECTED NEBRASKA OVER:** Ohio State, Indiana, Wisconsin, Notre Dame, Michigan, Michigan State, Syracuse

**Son of Debra and Warren Groce**

## Chris KELSAY



**HEIGHT: 6-4**  
**WEIGHT: 230**  
**SPEED: 4.6**  
**DOB: Oct. 31, 1979**

### RUSH END

**SCHOOL:** Auburn, Neb.

**DEFENSE RUN:** 4-3 and 5-2

**1997 HONORS:** Academic All-State; All-America (*SuperPrep*, *BlueChip*, *Parade*); All-USA (*USA Today*); All-Big 12 Region (National Recruiting Advisor); No. 28 defensive line prospect in the country (*SuperPrep*); Super State (*Lincoln Journal Star*); All-Nebraska (*Omaha World-Herald*); Class C-1 Defensive Player of the Year; Omaha Super Six

**1997 RECORD/PLAYOFFS:** 10-2/Lost in state semifinals

**OTHER SPORTS:** Basketball (forward — averaged 18 points and nine rebounds per game); Track (shot put — ranked No. 4 in state)

**HOBBIES & INTERESTS:** Hunting; fishing; traveling

#### HIGH SCHOOL COACH — DAVE CARLSON

"He showed what a leader and team player he could be when we moved him from tight end to offensive line, and he accepted the position switch without question. On defense, he was one of our ringleaders and he made great strides in terms of his instincts. Nebraska sees that he has all the tools to be a great college player, and given time, he's got unlimited potential. He may be able to make a contribution as a freshman because he's so far along physically — it will be just a matter of learning the system and the assignments."

#### FRANK SOLICH:

"Chris also was in our camp, and his brother, Chad, already is in our system. When you look at Chris, he probably has the frame to be bigger. He's a three-sport athlete who we think will have a chance to play early in our system and be a great player for us."

#### WHY CHRIS CHOSE NEBRASKA:

"Mainly because of the tradition of Nebraska football. My brother had a lot to do with it. He kind of led the way for me. I know if I'm ever unsure of anything, I can always ask him questions, because he's done it all. I've known Coach (Frank) Solich for a long time, and I know everything will stay the same. Coach Osborne's decision was a bit of a shock. I don't think anyone expected it for another several years, but I understand why he did it. I think he made the right decision. He had to do what he thought was best for himself, for the team and for the university, and he did. But that never made me question my decision to play for Nebraska."

#### CAPSULE

By picking Nebraska, Kelsay and his brother, Chad, are the fourth set of brothers to have played for the Huskers (joining the Wistroms, Bookers and Vedralis). A member of the Academic All-State team the past two years, Kelsay made 142 tackles (69 solo) and 14 sacks this past season.

**SELECTED NEBRASKA OVER:** Michigan, Kansas State, Iowa State, Iowa, Kansas, Wyoming, New Mexico

**Son of Jackie and Steve Kelsay**

## Nate KOLTERMAN



**HEIGHT: 6-4**  
**WEIGHT: 300**  
**SPEED: 5.3**  
**DOB: Aug. 15, 1979**

### OFFENSIVE LINEMAN

**SCHOOL:** Seward, Neb.

**OFFENSE/DEFENSE RUN:** I-Formation/53

**1997 HONORS:** All-America (National Recruiting Advisor); All-Nebraska (*Omaha World-Herald*); All-Big 12 Region (National Recruiting Advisor); Super State (*Lincoln Journal Star*); All-Conference; Big 12 Region Super 30 (*PrepStar*); honorable mention All-USA (*USA Today*)

**1997 RECORD/PLAYOFFS:** 8-2/Lost in second round

**OTHER SPORTS:** Track (discus, shot put); Wrestling

**HOBBIES & INTERESTS:** Showing cattle; pheasant hunting; fishing; weightlifting

#### HIGH SCHOOL COACH — GREG WELCH:

"Right now, he's a better run blocker than he is a pass blocker — he has to work on his feet. He's been as heavy as 330, but that was before he ruptured his appendix and missed half the season. His strength is now back to where it was. He's the only player I've ever brought up to the varsity as a freshman. He's a good student and president of FCA (Fellowship of Christian Athletes). He's a very hard worker, especially in the weight room. When he gets to Nebraska, he'll be in a dogfight, which probably will be the best thing that's ever happened to him."

#### FRANK SOLICH:

"Nate has everything we look for in an offensive lineman from the state of Nebraska. He's got great size and strength, yet he also has enough quickness that he can get out and pull and trap, which are so important in our offense. With Nate and Wes (Cody), we have two offensive linemen in this class. Remember, we gave scholarships to five offensive linemen a year ago, so we feel like we've done a really good job in this area over the last couple of years."

#### WHY NATE CHOSE NEBRASKA:

"They're national champions, and if you're an offensive lineman, there's no better place to play. Plus, it's really close to home. I don't know that I need to get bigger, but I can. When Coach Osborne first recruited me, I was up to about 330. But then I had my appendix removed (at the beginning of the 1997 season), so I lost a lot of weight. My strength is just now getting back to where it was before. I was sad to see Coach Osborne leave, but Coach Solich came to see me, and he assured me that everything would stay the same, and that there would not be a fall-off."

#### CAPSULE

After returning from appendix surgery, Kolterman played well in his final season. The track and wrestling letter-winner said he wants to major in agricultural nutrition.

**SELECTED NEBRASKA OVER:** Texas A&M, Kansas State, Michigan, Colorado, Colorado State, Wyoming, Fresno State

**Son of Linda and Clark Kolterman**

## Jason LOHR



**HEIGHT: 6-2**  
**WEIGHT: 270**  
**SPEED: 4.9**  
**DOB: May 23, 1979**

### DEFENSIVE LINEMAN

**SCHOOL:** Jenks, Okla.

**OFFENSE/DEFENSE RUN:** I-Formation/4-3

**1997 HONORS:** All-America (*PrepStar*, *SuperPrep*); All-State (*Daily Oklahoman*, Jim Thorpe Society, (*Tulsa World*); honorable mention All-USA (*USA Today*); District Most Valuable Player; State Co-Player of the Year; Oklahoma Defensive Player of the Year (*Tulsa World*); Oklahoma Prep 22

**1997 RECORD/PLAYOFFS:** 14-0/Class 6-A state champions

**HOBBIES & INTERESTS:** "None — football is my whole life."

#### HIGH SCHOOL COACH — ALAN TRIMBLE:

"He was a three-year offensive and defensive starter, and one of the most powerful kids to come through here — ever. He squats around 700, and he benches over 400. He's dominating against the run. He's a big powerful guy who's going to require a double-team. Nebraska lost a couple of good ones this year at defensive tackle, so he'll be valuable for depth there."

#### FRANK SOLICH:

"Jason is another player who many think may be too short to play on the defensive line, but that's not the way we feel here at Nebraska. Right now, Jason can bench press over 400 pounds and squat over 700, so he is a tremendously strong young player who opponents can not move around in the trenches. We have gotten used to having that type of (defensive tackles) who can control the opponent's running game. With players like Jason, we will continue to do that."

#### WHY JASON CHOSE NEBRASKA:

"Basically because of the tradition. Nebraska has a great program, and they have impressive academic support for their athletes. Even though Coach Osborne is leaving, I don't think that will change a thing. The program should be just as successful under Coach Solich as it always has been. I was surprised when Coach Osborne made his announcement, but that didn't change my mind at all."

#### CAPSULE

For the past two years, Lohr has been regarded as one of the top five players in Oklahoma. A dominant defensive lineman, Lohr had 95 tackles in his senior season (37 solo), 18 tackles-for-losses, four sacks and 23 hits on opposing quarterbacks. After finishing second in the state in Lohr's sophomore season, Jenks won the state title in each of Lohr's final two seasons. When playing Stillwater High, Lohr and the Jenks defense held quarterback Matt Holliday — who some consider the best passing quarterback in the country — to 95 yards.

**SELECTED NEBRASKA OVER:** Texas A&M, Kansas State, Oklahoma, Oklahoma State, Michigan

**Son of Debbie and Terry Miller**  
**Son of Carolyn and Dennis Lohr**



## Shawn McGANN



**HEIGHT: 6-0**  
**WEIGHT: 190**  
**SPEED: 4.4**  
**DOB: Oct. 1, 1979**

### WINGBACK

**SCHOOL:** Granger (Penn), Ind.

**OFFENSE RUN:** Split-back

**1997 HONORS:** All-State (Associated Press, Indiana Football Coaches Association); All-Midwest (*PrepStar*); Most Valuable Player of South Bend; All-Area Dream Team; Top 33 (*Bloomington Herald*); All-Northern Indiana Conference

**1997 RECORD/PLAYOFFS:** 14-1/Class 5A state champions

**OTHER SPORTS:** Track (100-meter dash, 200-meter dash, 4x100 relay)

**HOBBIES & INTERESTS:** Being outdoors; skiing; whitewater rafting; being with friends; shooting pool

#### HIGH SCHOOL COACH — CHRIS GEESMAN:

"We've never had a player go to Nebraska before. Shawn is a very fast, physical runner, who has great acceleration when he sees an opening. He's the fastest player we've ever had, and he's a real competitive kid. He's an extremely high-character young man — he's a good kid and a good player."

#### FRANK SOLICH:

"Shawn played I-back in high school, and was very successful. He is very dangerous in the open field and is a multi-talented player. Even though he was an excellent I-back in high school, we will use him as a wingback. At his size, we see him as the type of wingback who will block very well in the option part of our game, and he also has excellent running ability once he gets the ball. He should be a complete player for us at that position."

#### WHY SHAWN CHOSE NEBRASKA:

"First of all, the academics at Nebraska are solid in all areas. I'm still considering different areas of study (computer engineering, business, other), so I wanted a school that is pretty solid in everything. Beyond that, the football program at Nebraska is in a league of its own. I committed after Coach Osborne made the announcement that he's going to retire, and that was a bit of a shocker. But I know the program is in good hands with Coach Solich, and the winning tradition at Nebraska will keep going in the same direction."

#### CAPSULE

On a very talented Penn team, McGann only became a full-time starter in his senior season — a season in which he exploded for 1,614 yards and 31 touchdowns, and an average of 9.1 yards per carry. McGann scored the game-winning touchdown in the state title game, and has played on three consecutive state championship teams at Penn. Also dangerous on special teams, McGann jump-started his team with three kick returns for touchdowns during his senior campaign.

**SELECTED NEBRASKA OVER:** Michigan State, Ball State, Bowling Green, Notre Dame

**Son of Tessa and Pat McGann**

## Matt SHOOK



**HEIGHT: 6-3**  
**WEIGHT: 285**  
**SPEED: 5.0**  
**DOB: June 20, 1980**

### OFFENSIVE LINEMAN

**SCHOOL:** Medina, Ohio

**OFFENSE/DEFENSE RUN:** Multiple set/4-3

**1997 HONORS:** Preseason All-America (*PrepStar*); named to Big 33 team (that plays North/South All-Star game against top players from Pennsylvania); All-State (*Cleveland Plain Dealer*, *Medina Gazette*); All-Conference; All-County; All-District; No. 1 offensive lineman in Ohio (*Ohio Football magazine*)

**1997 RECORD/PLAYOFFS:** 8-2

**OTHER SPORTS:** Track (shot put, discus)

**HOBBIES & INTERESTS:** Car shows; weightlifting

#### HIGH SCHOOL COACH — JOHN SEMENICK:

"It (going to Nebraska) is hog heaven. Everyone's very aware of the assembly line that they've developed at Nebraska, and they have excellent offerings in his academic field. He has the opportunity to go to the No. 1 football program in the entire country, which they've proven time and time again. Coach Solich was here in the fall, and being a person from the Cleveland area, he really hit it off extremely well with Matt. I know Matt's really excited about the opportunity. He works extremely hard for everything he's ever gotten in his life. He hasn't missed a day in the weight room since the end of the football season."

#### FRANK SOLICH:

"Matt is the type of lineman who has the ability to be very successful in our program. Some schools were concerned about his height. At Nebraska, we have been able to produce outstanding linemen who have been 6-2 or 6-3. With the type of movement Matt has, and with his strength and ability, he should be an outstanding lineman here at Nebraska."

#### WHY MATT CHOSE NEBRASKA:

"Because of the fans and the community. The team, the coaches, the players — everything is great. It's quite an honor to be recruited to 'Lineman Country' — it's a lineman's dream. Nebraska is better than any place in getting recognition for its linemen. It's too bad Coach Osborne retired before I got a chance to play for him, but I gather Coach Solich has the contract and job security that he'll be there the whole time I'm going to be there."

#### CAPSULE

Shook hails from a relatively small town (population about 25,000) about a half an hour south of Cleveland — right in the middle of Big 10 country. When the major teams nearby (Ohio State, the Michigan schools, etc.) failed to offer him a scholarship, he gave his verbal (non-binding) commitment to Miami (Ohio), only to change it to Nebraska after signing day.

**SELECTED NEBRASKA OVER:** Miami (Ohio), Wisconsin, Pittsburgh

**Son of Kathe and Dale Shook**



## Jeremy SLECHTA



**HEIGHT: 6-5**  
**WEIGHT: 255**  
**SPEED: 5.0**  
**DOB: May 12, 1980**

### RUSH END/DEFENSIVE TACKLE

**SCHOOL:** LaVista (Papillion-LaVista), Neb.

**OFFENSE/DEFENSE RUN:** Multiple/4-3

**1997 HONORS:** All-America (*SuperPrep*, National Recruiting Advisor); All-Big 12 Region (*PrepStar*); honorable mention All-USA (*USA Today*); All-Nebraska (*Omaha World-Herald*); Super State (*Lincoln Journal Star*) Class A All-Star Team honorary captain (*Omaha World-Herald*); Area Defensive Player of the Year (Metro Coaches Association)

**1997 RECORD/PLAYOFFS:** 11-2/State runner-up

**OTHER SPORTS:** Basketball (averaged 18 points and eight rebounds per game)

**HOBBIES & INTERESTS:** Hunting; fishing

#### HIGH SCHOOL COACH — GENE SUHR:

"I'm happy to see Jeremy go to Nebraska, because I'll be able to follow his career. He can't go wrong at Nebraska, because they have a great staff and a great tradition. He'll grow — he started the season at 260 but lost some weight during the season. He'll put on the pounds needed to go inside (to defensive tackle). He does both (rush the passer and stuff the run) well. He chases the quarterback well — he has great pursuit. He's been a real pleasure to coach. I don't want to think about having to replace him."

#### FRANK SOLICH:

"Jeremy was in our camp and weighed as much as 255. I've seen Jeremy play basketball, and he really has excellent movement, covering his opponent all over the floor. We will give Jeremy an early look in terms of helping us out on the defensive line."

#### WHY JEREMY CHOSE NEBRASKA:

"I liked everything they had to offer, and it's closer to home than any of the other schools. Everyone I know goes to Nebraska. I grew up knowing I wanted to be a Cornhusker. Michigan was the only other school I really considered, but I know the assistants at Nebraska. If Coach (Lloyd) Carr quit at Michigan, I don't know anything about his assistants. My mom told me to ask how long Coach Osborne was going to be there, although I never did. It doesn't matter. I like Coach Solich, and I know the program will keep going like it is."

#### CAPSULE

Ranked by many as one of the top five players in Nebraska, Slechta (pronounced Seh-LECHT-tuh) would have received scholarship offers from 40 schools or more, but he let it be known early on that he was headed to Lincoln to play for the Huskers. Slechta, who said he always has wanted to be a Cornhusker, had 97 tackles in his senior season (24 solo), 13 tackles-for-losses, six passes deflected, and recovered a pair of fumbles.

**SELECTED NEBRASKA OVER:** Kansas, Kansas State, Iowa, Iowa State, Ohio State, Michigan, Notre Dame

**Son of Alice and Richard Slechta**

## Justin SMITH



**HEIGHT: 6-5**  
**WEIGHT: 240**  
**SPEED: 4.6**  
**DOB: Feb. 6, 1980**

### RUSH END

**SCHOOL:** Sherman, Texas

**OFFENSE/DEFENSE RUN:** Pro-I/4-3

**1997 HONORS:** All-America (*SuperPrep*, National Recruiting Advisor); No. 10 defensive line prospect in the country (*SuperPrep*); Southwest Region Defensive Player of the Year (*SuperPrep*); Texas Top 100 (*The Dallas Morning News*, *Houston Chronicle*, *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*) All-State; All-District; All-Area

**1997 RECORD/PLAYOFFS:** 8-4/Lost in second round

**OTHER SPORTS:** Powerlifting; Track (200, 400, discus, shot put)

**HOBBIES & INTERESTS:** Church; spending time with girlfriend; fishing

#### HIGH SCHOOL COACH — RONNIE TIPPS:

"He'll do a great job there — I think it's the best place for him. He needs to add more weight, but he can definitely do that at Nebraska. He has good speed and very good strength."

#### FRANK SOLICH:

"Justin has a great frame, and he's a player we feel can put on a lot of weight and develop into a massive rush end who will be very tough to block. We feel very good about him, as he has great speed and loves to work in the weight room. That is the kind of work ethic we have grown accustomed to at Nebraska."

#### WHY JUSTIN CHOSE NEBRASKA:

"I chose Nebraska because of the program, the stability, the winning tradition. The coaching staff is the best anywhere, and the academic support available to the student-athletes is as good as anyone's. Everything about the program is the best in the nation. I was surprised when Coach Osborne announced he was going to retire, but I know the coaching staff still will be the best in the nation with Coach Solich taking over. They'll have three seniors at my position next year, I think, but maybe I can go up there and work hard and compete for some back-up time. I just don't think there is (another school) with Nebraska's football team, their stadium, their support and their tradition of success."

#### CAPSULE

There are few big players who have Smith's mobility. In addition to his size and mobility, Smith is a workout fanatic who is expected to add significant size and muscle to his already-strong frame. Smith is a three-year letter-winner in track and powerlifting. His older brother, Jason, is an all-conference defensive tackle at (Div. II) Harding University in Arkansas.

**SELECTED NEBRASKA OVER:** Kansas State, SMU, Missouri, Texas, Baylor

**Son of Martha and Mark Smith**

## Randy STELLA



**HEIGHT: 6-2**  
**WEIGHT: 196**  
**SPEED: 4.6**  
**DOB: Sept. 11, 1979**

### LINEBACKER

**SCHOOL:** Omaha (Benson), Neb.

**OFFENSE/DEFENSE RUN:** Split backfield veer/52

**1997 HONORS:** All-America (*Parade*, *SuperPrep*, National Recruiting Advisor); All-Big 12 Region (*PrepStar*); All-Nebraska (*Omaha World-Herald*); Super State (*Lincoln Journal-Star*); All-Metro; All-Division

**1997 RECORD/PLAYOFFS:** 7-4/Lost in second round

**OTHER SPORTS:** Basketball (averaged 21 points and 12 rebounds per game); Track (long jump, 200-meter dash, 4x100-meter relay)

**HOBBIES & INTERESTS:** Basketball; track; being with friends; playing video games

#### HIGH SCHOOL COACH — LONNIE TAPP:

"Nebraska is a great system for him. He should fit right in at weakside linebacker. He plays just like Eric Johnson. He's tough against the run. His closing speed on a running back is just incredible. He could play strong safety if he needs to, because he covers receivers like a safety. He was about to visit Michigan, until Coach Solich told him Nebraska only had so many scholarships left. Nebraska will have him up to 225 pounds, and he won't lose any speed."

#### FRANK SOLICH:

"I think Randy is a tremendous talent. In fact, I think you would be hard-pressed to find many players around the country who can match Randy athletically. He has accomplished a lot on the football field, and Randy feels he could come in here and compete for us at running back, and we feel he probably could. But we believe he is a great linebacker, and that is what he will be playing here at Nebraska."

#### WHY RANDY CHOSE NEBRASKA:

"I've wanted to play there my whole life. I live here in Nebraska, and I know a lot of people who go there. I know the history of the program. Coach (Tom) Osborne's announcement was shocking, but it wasn't going to change my mind. I know there's not going to be much difference in the program. I know Coach (Frank) Solich, and I know he's a great coach. He may be a little more animated on the sideline than Coach Osborne, but I know he'll keep the program rolling in the same direction."

#### CAPSULE

State long jump champion, who also anchored the state champion 4x100 relay team, is the first player from Benson to sign with the Cornhuskers since Tony Veland. Stella will line up at outside linebacker for the Huskers, where his remarkable speed will allow him to rush the passer and pursue ball carriers. Had 120 tackles, four sacks and an interception as a senior.

**SELECTED NEBRASKA OVER:** Kansas, Michigan, Iowa State, Iowa

**Son of Annette Stella**

## Tony TATA



**HEIGHT: 6-2**  
**WEIGHT: 240**  
**SPEED: 4.72**  
**DOB: Jan. 11, 1979**

### LINEBACKER

**SCHOOL:** Honolulu (St. Louis), Hawaii

**OFFENSE/DEFENSE RUN:** 1-back, Run-n-Shoot/4-3

**1997 HONORS:** Hawaii Player of the Year (*USA Today*); Hawaii Defensive Player of the Year (*USA Today*); honorable mention All-USA (*USA Today*); second-team All-America (Dick Wilkins); All-State; Division All-Star

**1997 RECORD/PLAYOFFS:** 13-1/State champions (12th straight year)

**HOBBIES & INTERESTS:** Playing piano (often in church); weightlifting

#### HIGH SCHOOL COACH — CAL LEE:

"Tony is a fantastic athlete who plays with tremendous emotion on the field. He's an excellent student, and I think he brings to the Huskers exactly what they are looking for, both in athletic ability and in academic quality. He will be a great player at Nebraska."

#### FRANK SOLICH:

"Tony is the kind of player who will start as a middle linebacker, but who could wind up at another position for us. He's played rush end and defensive tackle in high school, but we will start him at 'Mike' (middle) linebacker."

#### WHY TONY CHOSE NEBRASKA:

"They were No. 1 in the nation this year, which means they have the No. 1 program in the nation, and I wanted to be part of that. I liked the academic programs they have there, and the fact that the coaches really support their student-athletes — on the field and in the classroom. (On whether 1997 NU freshman Dominic Raiola — Tata's former St. Louis teammate — affected his decision) He's talked to me a lot about it, when I visited there and when he's been home. I'll be happy to get the chance to spend some time with him, but no, he's not the reason I chose Nebraska. And I like the environment, including the cold weather."

#### CAPSULE

Nebraska is developing quite a pipeline into Hawaii, particularly into St. Louis High School. (Offensive lineman Dominic Raiola signed with the Cornhuskers in 1997.) In all, there are four scholarship athletes at Nebraska who hail from Hawaii. Tata has four older brothers who have played Division I-A football. (Brothers Pulou, Tasi and Silila all played for Oregon's 1994 Rose Bowl team, while Vavae is a junior defensive end at UCLA). Productive and strong, Tata had 154 tackles and 26 sacks over the past two years, and he can bench press 365 and squat 420.

**SELECTED NEBRASKA OVER:** Arizona, Colorado, Utah, Washington, Tennessee, LSU

**Son of Mele and Peni Tata**



## Wilson THOMAS



**HEIGHT: 6-6**

**WEIGHT: 195**

**SPEED: 4.6**

**DOB: Oct. 21, 1979**

### WIDE RECEIVER

**SCHOOL:** Omaha (North), Neb.

**OFFENSE/DEFENSE RUN:** I-Formation/5-2

**1997 HONORS:** Honorable mention All-USA (*USA Today*); All-Midlands (*SuperPrep*); Super State (*Lincoln Journal Star*); All-Nebraska (*Omaha World-Herald*); All-Metro; All-Division

**1997 RECORD:** 4-6

**OTHER SPORTS:** Basketball (averaged 14 points and seven rebounds per game); Track (long jump, high jump, triple jump)

**HOBBIES & INTERESTS:** Playing basketball; dancing; electronics; car audio

#### HIGH SCHOOL COACH — HERMAN COLVIN:

"Nebraska is a great system for him — they have everything there. If he bulks up, he could play rush end — that's what he likes. He could be great, because he's run an electronically timed 4.5 (in the 40-yard dash). He has as much speed as anyone. He's a diamond in the rough, because he only played two years of high school football."

#### FRANK SOLICH:

"Wilson has great size and ability. I saw him play basketball this season, and he's a tremendous player. He did visit with (Nebraska men's basketball head coach) Danny (Nee) when he was down here on his visit to talk about maybe at some point down the road trying to play both sports here at Nebraska. We would be open to that, but we would want him to establish himself first on the football field. For a guy with that size, who can long jump and high jump so well, we feel we really have something special. He's played wide receiver and defensive end, but we want to use him as a wide receiver. It will be nice to have somebody at that size at wide receiver."

#### WHY WILSON CHOSE NEBRASKA:

"Most of the schools I talked to were all trying to compete with Nebraska. I figured, 'Why go to all these schools that are all trying to compete with the same program, when you can just go to that program?' The academic support programs they have for the athletes at Nebraska are great. (On Osborne's resignation) That didn't affect me too much — the names may change, but the characteristics of the program are going to stay the same."

#### CAPSULE

Thomas is one of the best overall athletes the Cornhuskers signed. He excels at three sports, plays multiple positions (in football) and is a key member on each team. Expected to start at receiver, he has the frame to bulk up and play rush end. Thomas is a cousin of Nebraska rush end Mike Rucker.

**SELECTED NEBRASKA OVER:** Kansas State, Iowa State, Colorado State, Wyoming, Kansas, New Mexico State

**Son of Darcel Brown and Wilson Thomas**

# All-Sport Signings

## VOLLEYBALL

Volleyball coach **Terry Pettit** announced the signing of **Jenny Kropp** of Grand Island (Central Catholic), Neb., to a national letter-of-intent.

Kropp, a 6-2 middle blocker, finished her prep career with a .447 career hitting percentage, a school-record 1,007 kills and 271 career blocks. She is a three-time, first-team, all-state selection and a third-team prep All-America. Kropp helped lead her team to a state championship in 1994 and state runner-up finishes in 1995 and 1996. She holds the school record for kills in a single match (25), kills in a season (359) and ace blocks (271). Kropp also earned all-state honors in basketball.

"We are very fortunate that Jenny has decided to join us in Lincoln," Pettit said. "We had only one scholarship to offer this year and she's the person we wanted. She made an early commitment to us — almost a year ago this past December. Jenny has the athletic ability, the size, the frame and the quickness to be an outstanding player here."

Pettit also announced that **Pam Krejci** of Crete has declared her intention to attend Nebraska in the fall and walk on the volleyball team. Krejci, a 6-2 middle blocker, was a three-time Class B state selection and three-time all-conference honoree at Crete. She recorded 195 kills, a .379 hitting percentage, and averaged 4.2 blocks per game last fall. Krejci also participated in basketball and was the 1997 Class B state shot put champion.

## SOCCER

Two of the top players in Nebraska and two more of the best in Colorado signed letters-of-intent to play for the women's soccer team, Nebraska coach **John Walker** announced.

As he heads into his fifth season with the Huskers, Walker said the 1998 class is one of his best.

"All four of the players that we have signed have a chance to come in and contribute right away," Walker said. "It is similar to the recruiting class we had two years ago when **Lindsay Eddleman**, **Jenny Benson**, **Isabelle Morneau** and **Sharolta Nonen** were able to come in and play right from the start."

Walker, who has led Nebraska to back-to-back final top 10 national rankings, said the Huskers' recruiting efforts are not complete with the possible addition of two more recruits before next fall.

Gatorade Circle of Champions Nebraska Player of the Year **Meghan Anderson** from Omaha (Burke) heads the list of Husker recruits.

Anderson has earned a spot on the U.S. Under-17 National Team and is a Region II Olympic Development Program player. She has also earned first-team All-Nebraska honors.

Joining Anderson is Burke teammate **Becky Preston**, who also earned All-Nebraska honors last season. Preston, a defender/striker, who is also a Region II Olympic Development Program teammate of Anderson, has blazing speed, and is expected to be one of the three fastest Huskers next season, along with sophomore-to-be **Julie Greco** and third-team All-America defender Nonen.

Along with the two outstanding in-state recruits, the Huskers received commitments from two all-staters from Colorado, headlined by Gatorade Circle of Champions Player of the Year **Kelly Rheem**. Rheem is an all-state striker and an NSCAA High School All-American from Lakewood (Arapahoe), Colo.

Joining Rheem is defender **Karla Ledford** from Englewood, Colo. Ledford was a second-team all-stater for Coach Taylor Betz at Eaglecrest High School last season.

Nebraska lost five seniors to graduation from the 1997 team that finished the season with an 18-4 record, finished with a No. 7 national ranking. ■

# Intent On Busting The Bubble

**Paul Sanderford  
vows NU won't be  
left out of the NCAA  
Tournament this year  
By Curt McKeever**

## WOMEN'S HOOPS

**T**he Nebraska women's basketball team cruised into their game at Iowa State on Feb. 7 revved up by a three-game winning streak, intent on wheeling its way into the upper echelon of the Big 12 Conference.

Instead, the Huskers left Hilton Coliseum with skid marks on the backs of their jerseys.

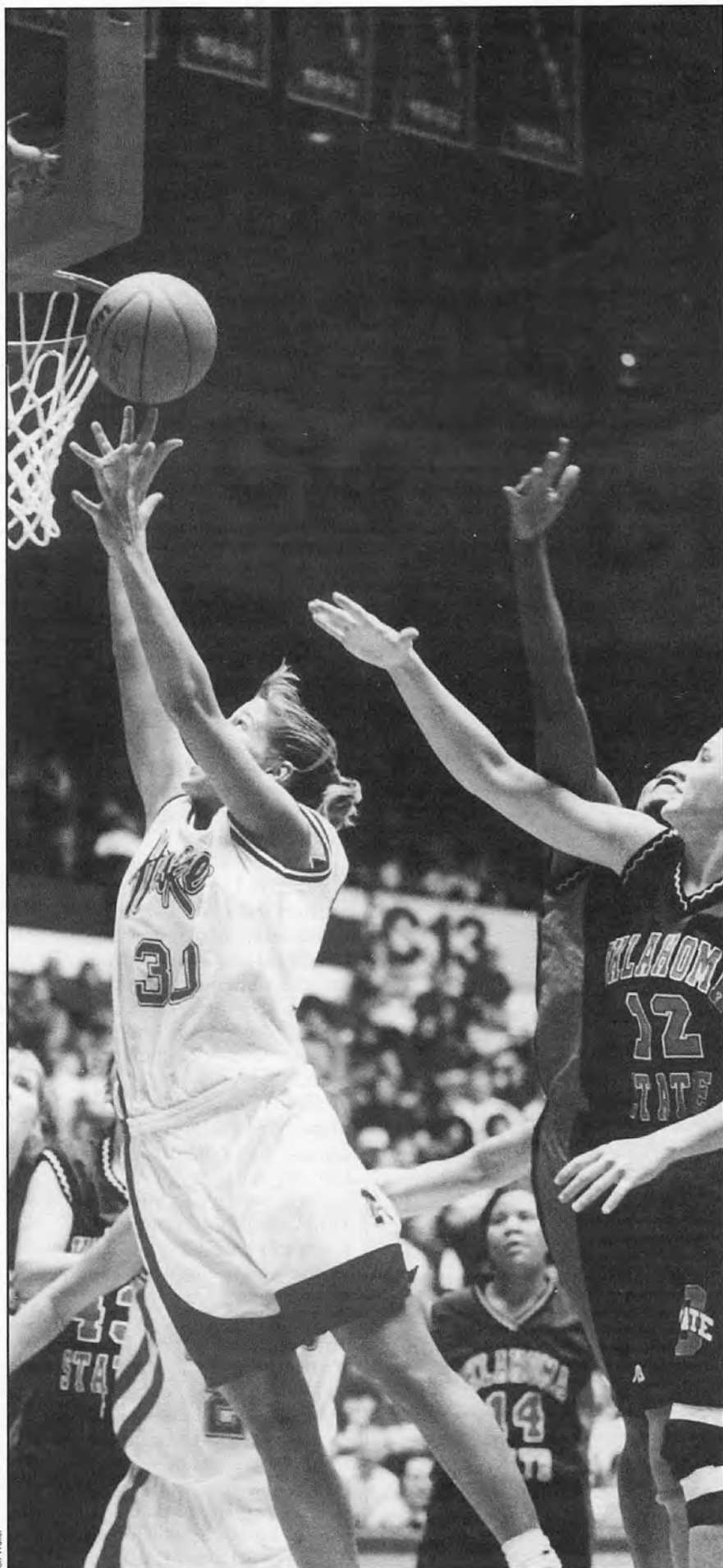
"It seems like we couldn't find the right person (to guard)," guard Brooke Schwartz said after Nebraska dropped an 83-69 decision to fall to 17-7 on the season.

The result increased the importance of Nebraska's final six regular-season games.

While Iowa State improved its grip on second place in the league at 8-2 (just one game behind Texas Tech), the Huskers found themselves in fifth place at 6-4.

If it were NCAA Tournament selection time right now, the Huskers probably would be on the bubble. The popular notion among Big 12 coaches is that the league will get five entrants

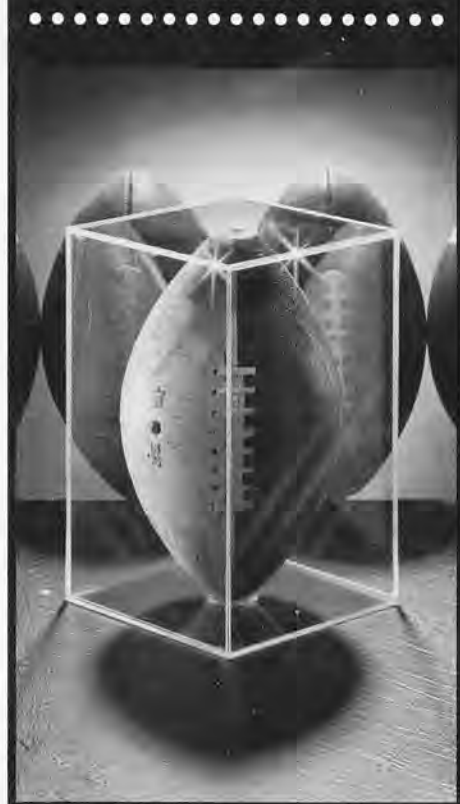
**Behind all-conference performer Anna DeForge, Nebraska made Oklahoma State look ordinary.**



Jon Walker



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into the 64-team NCAA field.

Six Big 12 clubs made it last year. Nebraska finished 19-9 overall and 8-8 in the conference, but was bypassed after losing five of its final seven regular-season games.

Although first-year coach Paul Sanderford was dejected by the setback in Ames, Iowa, he vowed the Huskers will not repeat their late-season swoon of 1997.

"This team has won 17 games. We'll rebound," he said. "We'll come back and play. We're still going to be a factor in the Big 12 Conference."

NU will definitely have a chance. Sanderford's club faces the league's top three teams during the final six games.

"Paul knows what he's doing. Nebraska will be fine," Iowa State coach Bill Fennelly contended. "That team plays relentlessly the whole time."

Nebraska has been ranked for almost the entire season since knocking off two top 20 teams and finishing second in the Preseason Women's National Invitational Tournament. The Huskers were No. 25 by The Associated Press and No. 22 in the *USA Today* coaches' poll entering the Iowa State game. Ironically, the team they replaced in the AP poll that week was the Cyclones.

"For the first time all year, I'm looking forward to going on the road," Sanderford said prior to the game. "We're ready to play anybody."

Nebraska was coming off an impressive homestand, during which it beat Missouri, 79-61; Oklahoma State, 77-47; and Texas, 87-75 to improve to 13-0 on the Sports Center court.

Senior guard and All-Big 12 performer Anna DeForge fueled the win against the Longhorns with a game-high 25 points.

"Nobody will shut her down," Texas coach Jody Conradt said, "but the rest of their team waits for opportunities and is effective when they get them."

When Nebraska played Oklahoma State, the teams were tied in the league standings. But the Huskers played their most complete half of the year and led by 29 at the break.

"That's a good basketball team, and we made them look awful in the first half," Sanderford said.

DeForge had 24 points in the win against Missouri, which became only the second team all season to out-

rebound Nebraska.

Iowa State became the third, but it was the Cyclones' three-point shooting that made the biggest difference. Playing against a zone defense, the Big 12's leading three-point shooting team hit six from that range in the first half to take a 42-22 lead.

The game was a general reflection of how Nebraska has played while compiling a 2-7 road record. In those losses, the Huskers have usually fallen behind early.

Sanderford, who guided Western Kentucky to three Final Four appearances, might have to be the wild card in the stretch run. But the intensity he brings to games can't help but rub off on his team.

That was evident back in November, when Nebraska gave sixth-ranked Connecticut all it wanted on its home court in the championship of the Preseason WNIT.

"We'll certainly try to keep improving," Sanderford said after that 71-61 loss, "and if I have anything to do with it, we'll still be playing in March." ■

## 1997-98 WOMEN'S HOOP SCHEDULE/RESULTS

**Overall Record: 18-7**  
**Conference Record: 7-4**

N7	Slavyanka (Exhib)	W, 83-78
N12	Victoria All-Stars (Exhib)	L, 67-82
N14-21	Women's NIT	
N14	vs. Miami (Ohio)	W, 88-54
N16	vs. Alabama	W, 74-66
N21	vs. Western Kentucky	W, 84-70
N22	vs. Connecticut	L, 71-81
N24	Creighton	W, 80-59
N28-29	CableVision Classic	
N28	vs. Stetson	W, 82-42
N29	vs. Kentucky	W, 68-59
D3	Bradley	W, 80-66
D5-7	Copper Bowl Classic	
D5	vs. Wichita State	W, 71-69
D7	vs. Arizona	L, 56-68
D12	@ Wisconsin-Green Bay	W, 76-60
D13	@ Wisconsin-Milwaukee	L, 76-88
D20	Wyoming	W, 92-41
D30	Northern Illinois	W, 95-57
J4	Kansas State	W, 80-58
J7	@ Colorado	L, 78-84
J10	@ Kansas (Fox)	L, 74-83
J14	Texas A&M	W, 88-74
J17	@ Kansas State	W, 78-47
J21	@ Baylor	L, 71-76
J28	Texas	W, 87-75
J31	Oklahoma State (Fox)	W, 77-47
F4	Missouri	W, 79-61
F7	@ Iowa State	L, 69-83
F11	Kansas	W, 84-69
F14	@ Oklahoma	2 p.m.
F17	@ Missouri	7 p.m.
F22	Colorado (Fox)	3 p.m.
F25	@ Texas Tech	7 p.m.
F28	Iowa State	7:05 p.m.
M3-7	Big 12 Tournament Kansas City, Mo.	TBA



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# SHAKE AND BAKE

**Nebraska and the rest of its Big 12 brethren will have to heat up in the postseason in order to lose the tag of "overrated"**

**D**anny Nee took exception to a recent suggestion that the quality of play in the Big 12 was down this season. The suggestion was made by a reporter at Nee's weekly news conference.

"I don't agree with any of what you just said," Nee told the reporter. "I understand it goes in these pendulums. I understand perception. But when you look at the quality of the league..."

"OK, one way to look at it is NBA draft choices. You're going to have two in the top five."

Seniors Raef LaFrentz of Kansas and Cory Carr of Texas Tech, who was leading the conference in scoring in late January, are almost certain to be among the lottery picks in the NBA draft.

"Then you've got (Tyronn) Lue; you've got (Corey) Brewer; you've got (Brian) Skinner. They're all going to be highly drafted top 20 players," Nee said. "There's just five off the top of my head."

Oklahoma's Brewer and Baylor's Skinner also are seniors. Lue, of course, is a junior. But there's a good chance he'll decide to bypass his senior season at Nebraska and declare for the draft.

Despite the presence of such outstanding individuals, the Big 12 hasn't

**Nebraska was far from intimidated by Kansas, as Cookie Belcher showed by taking the ball hard to the rim in the 71-82 defeat in Lincoln.**

been well-represented in the national polls this season. In fact, Kansas has been the only ratings regular.

The Jayhawks are serious NCAA championship contenders.

Nee acknowledged the Big 12's lack of national prestige this season. "I know we don't have an abundance of teams (in the rankings)," he said. "Do I think the ACC is loaded? Do I think they're the best conference? Absolutely. Do I think the Pac-10 is hot, with an undefeated team in Stanford (until late January) and having the (defending) national champ in Arizona? Yes."

"But I don't think there's anything wrong with the Big 12. And I think in time it's going to shake out. I really believe that. Suppose when it all ends, Kansas wins the national championship. Then are you still going to say it's a weak league? Or that they won the Big 12 at a weak time? That doesn't make sense to me. I don't agree with that. I don't see it."

According to Nee, changes in NCAA scholarship limits have had a significant effect on men's basketball. As a result, "I don't think you're going to see the domineering teams," he said.

"I think you're going to see quality teams... I mean, the cream."

"I think the word is over-used, but they're getting what they want. They're getting parity. They're getting it with the 13 scholarships and kids going early (to the NBA)."

Nee used Maryland of the Atlantic Coast Conference as an example. The Terrapins lost decisively to conference

## Best in the South?

Kansas is the best in the North Division of the Big 12. That was apparent from the beginning. No one questioned the Jayhawks. But the South Division has been something of a scramble.

Oklahoma got Nebraska's vote for the best of the Big 12's South when the teams played at the Devaney Sports Center in mid-January. "Overall, Oklahoma is probably the deepest team in the South, the biggest team we're going to face," said **Andy Markowski**, the Cornhuskers' junior forward.

"If we want to reach our goals of going to the tournament, we've got to beat teams like Oklahoma, especially at home. If we can take care of our homecourt, we should be sitting fine."

The Sooners, who were ranked in the preseason Top 25, came to the Sports Center with a 13-4 record and an eight-game winning streak — with an average margin of victory of 14 points.

"It's a high-value game," Nee said beforehand. "I just feel they're one of the best teams in our league. They're going to be in the post-season. They're on a hot streak. They've beaten us the last couple of times we played them in very close games. I just think they're a very good basketball team."

The Cornhuskers defeated Oklahoma, 53-43, and the game was physical. However, "the officials really allowed the teams to play," said Nee. "You had to be a warrior out there today."

That description fit several players, including **Tyronn Lue**, who took control of the contest down the stretch, scoring 15 of Nebraska's final 18 points to finish with a game-high 24.

Lue also made a significant contribution defensively, guarding Oklahoma's **Michael Johnson**, who scored four points on 2-of-9 shooting from the field, and was charged with eight turnovers.

"This is the advantage of a great player," Nee said. "He does take over down the stretch."

Markowski also came up big against the Sooners. Although he scored only two points, he grabbed 15 rebounds, made four assists and blocked a shot — in 39 minutes of action.

The Cornhuskers attempted what was for them an inordinate number of three-point shots against Oklahoma. They finished 8-of-15 from that distance for the game.

"I thought it was kind of a 'hump' game for us," said Markowski. "We protected our home floor."

And beat the South's best team? The next few weeks will tell. ■



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rival Duke, then came back to upset No. 1-ranked North Carolina.

Missouri, which lost to Duke by 23 at the Maui Invitational in late November, defeated Maryland at Columbia, Mo., in late December and upset 12th-ranked Iowa at Columbia in late January.

The Tigers also upset Kansas two weeks after losing at Kansas State, 111-56.

"In our league, we have teams that can beat anyone on a given night," Nee said.

From the beginning, it was apparent the conference season would be a scramble to see what team could finish second to Kansas, a prohibitive favorite to win the regular-season title, at least.

Even when LaFrentz was sidelined, the Jayhawks were able to make do.

Regardless of the Big 12's power rating, "this conference is healthy," said Nee. "I think it will shake out that way the further along it (the season) develops. I don't think we have to defend it."

Any questions? ■

## 1997-98 MEN'S HOOP SCHEDULE/RESULTS

Overall Record: 13-10  
Conference Record: 4-6

N5	Pella Windows (Exhib)	W, 83-63
N10	Marathon Oil (Exhib)	W, 87-72
N16	UNC Greensboro	W, 75-51
N19	Western Illinois	W, 86-57
N22	New Orleans	W, 81-66
N25	Colorado State	W, 64-57
N29	Texas-San Antonio	W, 68-59
D1	@ Tulsa	L, 68-85
D5-6	Ameritas Classic	
D5	vs. UNC Wilm.	W, 85-68
D6	vs. Grambling	W, 85-48
D10	@ Creighton	L, 73-84
D13	@ Minnesota	W, 70-66
D27-30	Outrigger Rainbow Classic	
	Honolulu, Hawaii	
D27	vs. Virginia	W, 80-65
D29	vs. Hawaii	L, 62-87
D30	Vanderbilt	L, 69-80
J3	@ Kansas (ESPN)	L, 76-96
J7	@ Oklahoma State	W, 67-62
J11	Colorado	W, 87-72
J18	Oklahoma	W, 53-43
J21	@ Texas	L, 91-105
J24	Iowa State	W, 63-49
J28	@ Kansas State	L, 49-72
F1	Kansas (ABC)	L, 71-82
F4	@ Missouri	L, 76-81 (OT)
F7	Kansas State	L, 63-69
F11	@ Texas A&M	7 p.m.
F14	Baylor	7:05 p.m.
F18	Missouri	7:05 p.m.
F21	@ Colorado	7 p.m.
F25	Texas Tech	7:05 p.m.
F28	@ Iowa State (ESPN)	6:30 p.m.
M5-8	Big 12 Tournament	
	Kansas City, Mo.	TBA

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## Conference Bragging Rights Up For Grabs

*Nebraska, Texas and Oklahoma each can lay claim to Big 12's best recruiting class*

**F**or the first time in years it's debatable which school had the top recruiting class in the Big 12. More often than not, one school will stand alone as the clear winner, leaving only some debate as to who finished as the runner-up.

But this year, almost everyone has a different team finishing first in the conference recruiting race.

Nebraska, Oklahoma and Texas all had classes that have been rated by at least someone as the best in the Big 12. It's hard to pick against any of the classes, but for the sake of argument we will start with Texas, which rallied under new head coach **Mack Brown**.

The Longhorns were headed toward disaster before Brown took

**Quarterback Matt Holliday, one of the most sought-after recruits in the country, chose to stay home at Oklahoma State.**



**JAMES HALE**

instant credibility. All-America quarterback **Adam Dunn** of New Caney, Texas, also is in the fold, along with All-America offensive lineman **Antwan Kirk-Hughes** of Waxahachie, Texas. All-America wide receiver **Montrell Flowers** of Dallas (Skyline) picked the Horns over Colorado and Baylor on signing day.

On defense, the Longhorns raided Texas City, Texas, for three potential stars — linebacker **Jermain Anderson**, defensive back **Tyrone Jones** and linebacker **Everick Rawls**. **Mike Williams** of The Colony, Texas, weighs in at 320 pounds and could play on either the offensive line or defensive line. Another player ranked by most among the top 50 in Texas, safety **Jamal Joyner** of Dallas (Carter), backed off from his early commitment to Colorado to play for the Longhorns.

The fact that Nebraska head coach **Tom Osborne** retired didn't slow down the Husker recruiting effort.



**Oklahoma landed All-America running back Josh Norman, even though he never took an official visit to Norman.**

Scarborough, Toronto, Canada — and All-America **DeAntae Grixby** of Omaha (Central), Neb. Tight end **Jon Bowling** of Lincoln (Southeast), Neb., was named the top player in the state by *USA Today*.

On defense, the Huskers bolstered their linebacker crew with **Demoine Adams** of Pine Bluff, Ark. Cornerback **DeJuan Groce** of Lakewood (St. Edward), Ohio, is ranked by many as one of the top 100 players in the country. Defensive end **Justin Smith** of Sherman, Texas, was another great signing by the Huskers, who signed five defensive linemen in all.

Oklahoma head coach **John Blake** showed his recruiting prowess, signing an outstanding class despite having guided the Sooners to back-to-back four-win seasons. The Sooners concentrated on the defensive side of the ball, and landed a pair of All-America honorees, in linebacker **Rocky Calmus** of Jenks, Okla., and defensive end **Frank Romero** of Moore, Okla. Strong safety **Roy Williams** of Union City, Calif., is ranked as one of the top 100 players in the West, and defensive tackle **Angelo Banks** of Fort Scott (Kan.) Community College should help the Sooners right



over, and the Horns immediately had momentum on their side. When All-America running back **Victor Ike** of Austin (Bowie), Texas, changed his commitment from Texas A&M to Texas, Brown had won his first victory over the Aggies, and given his class

Osborne continued to recruit after he made his announcement, and Husker coach **Frank Solich** always has been regarded as a stellar recruiter. Nebraska needed running backs and signed several, including the top player in Canada — **Dahrran Diedrick** of

Stephen Holman/Silverstar News/Press

away.

On signing day, the Sooners landed two All-America running backs in **Jay Hunt** of Midwest City (Carl Albert) and **Josh Norman** of Midland (Lee), Texas. All-America offensive tackle **Mike Skinner** of Tahlequah, Okla., will lead the way up front, while All-America tight end **Trent Smith** is a **Stephen Alexander** clone. JUCO All-America center **Matt O'Neal** should be an instant starter.

Texas A&M signed as good a group of offensive skill players as anybody in the conference. The Aggies signed two All-America quarterbacks in **Vance Smith** and **Chip Ambres**, plus four wide receivers with great potential in **Robert Ferguson** of Houston (Spring

**Michael Lewis** of Rosenberg (Lamar Consolidated), Texas, is a great free safety prospect, and is joined on the Buffalo defense by cornerback **Donald Strickland** of San Francisco,

Calif., and All-America linebacker **Jashon Sykes** of Gardena, Calif.

Missouri had its best class under head coach **Larry Smith**. The Tigers managed to keep All-America offen-



**Vance Smith of Fort Worth — the top-rated passing quarterback in Texas — turned down the University of Tennessee, among others, to sign with the Aggies of Texas A&M.**

Woods), Texas; **Dwain Goynes** of LaMarque, Texas; **Raphael "Choo" Freeman** of Dallas (Dallas Christian) and **Bethel Johnson** of Corsicana, Texas. Each is rated by most among the top 100 players in the state.

Linebacker **Brian Gamble** of Alto, Texas, was the Aggies lone defensive signee.

Despite the abundance of talent in Colorado this year, the Colorado Buffaloes bombed within their home state, signing only one Colorado athlete — **Justin Bates**, an offensive lineman from Arvada. Quarterback **Taylor Barton** of Beaverton, Ore., is regarded by many as one of the top 10 passing quarterbacks in the country, while linebacker **Brandon Drumm** of Anchorage, Alaska, appears on many national top 100 lists.

## Huskers Illustrated

# BIG 12 TOP FIVE

### QUARTERBACKS

PLAYER	HT.	WT.	40	HOMETOWN (H.S.)	COLLEGE
Matt Holliday	6-5	210	4.6	Stillwater, Okla.	Oklahoma St.
Taylor Barton	6-2	200	4.8	Beaverton, Ore.	Colorado
Chip Ambres	6-1	180	4.4	Beaumont (Westbrook), Texas	Texas A&M
Vance Smith	6-5	230	4.7	Fort Worth (FW Christian), Texas	Texas A&M
Adam Dunn	6-5	230	4.5	New Caney, Texas	Texas

### RUNNING BACK

PLAYER	HT.	WT.	40	HOMETOWN (H.S.)	COLLEGE
Victor Ike	6-0	180	4.3	Austin (Bowie), Texas	Texas
Ben Gay	6-1	200	4.3	Spring, Texas	Baylor
Josh Norman	6-2 1/2	220	4.6	Midland (Robert E. Lee), Texas	Oklahoma
Frank Murphy	6-1	210	4.5	Garden City (Kan.) C.C.	Kansas St.
Jay Hunt	5-11	192	4.4	Midwest City (Carl Albert), Okla.	Oklahoma

### RECEIVER

PLAYER	HT.	WT.	40	HOMETOWN (H.S.)	COLLEGE
Montrell Flowers	5-10	175	4.3	Dallas (Skyline), Texas	Texas
Quincy Morgan	6-3	180	4.5	Garden City (Kan.) C.C.	Kansas St.
Byron Gassaway	6-4	180	4.4	Kansas City (Grandview), Mo.	Kansas
Robert Ferguson	6-3	190	4.5	Houston (Spring Woods), Texas	Texas A&M
Lawson Giddings	6-3	185	4.4	McAlester, Okla.	Oklahoma St.

### TIGHT END

PLAYER	HT.	WT.	40	HOMETOWN (H.S.)	COLLEGE
Trent Smith	6-6	225	4.7	Clinton, Okla.	Oklahoma
Jon Bowling	6-4	215	4.8	Lincoln (Southeast), Neb.	Nebraska
Greg Porter	6-4	225	4.7	Keller, Texas	Texas A&M
David Hurst	6-4	215	4.6	Round Rock (McNeill), Texas	Kansas
Khary Jackson	6-3	232	4.7	Kemper Military Academy, Kan.	Oklahoma St.

### OFFENSIVE LINE

PLAYER	HT.	WT.	40	HOMETOWN (H.S.)	COLLEGE
Justin Bland	6-6	290	5.2	Chillicothe, Mo.	Missouri
Stockar McDougle	6-7	365	5.2	Navarro (Texas) C.C.	Oklahoma
Antwan Kirk-Hughes	6-4	300	5.0	Waxahachie, Texas	Texas
Matt O'Neal	6-4	275	4.8	Palomar (Calif.) College	Oklahoma
Nate Kolterman	6-4	300	5.2	Seward, Neb.	Nebraska

### DEFENSIVE LINE

PLAYER	HT.	WT.	40	HOMETOWN (H.S.)	COLLEGE
Frank Romero	6-5	240	4.7	Moore, Okla.	Oklahoma
Casey Godwin	6-4	255	4.7	Jones (Miss.) C.C.	Oklahoma St.
Eddrick Brooks	6-3	255	4.6	Northeastern (Okla.) J.C.	Baylor
Eugene Langford	6-3	240	4.6	Wichita (West), Kan.	Kansas St.
Jason Lohr	6-2	270	4.9	Jenks, Okla.	Nebraska

### LINEBACKER

PLAYER	HT.	WT.	40	HOMETOWN (H.S.)	COLLEGE
Mike Clay	6-3	255	4.6	Houston (Aldine Nimitz), Texas	Missouri
Jashon Sykes	6-3	218	4.6	Gardena (Serra), Calif.	Colorado
Rocky Calmus	6-4	215	4.6	Jenks, Okla.	Oklahoma
Fred Rogers	6-3	250	4.7	Navarro (Texas) C.C.	Baylor
Troy West	6-4	205	4.5	Hutchinson (Kan.) C.C.	Oklahoma St.

### DEFENSIVE BACK

PLAYER	HT.	WT.	40	HOMETOWN (H.S.)	COLLEGE
DeJuan Groce	5-10	180	4.4	Omaha (Central), Neb.	Nebraska
Chris Cash	5-11	180	4.4	Stockton (Franklin), Calif.	Colorado
Dale Hall	6-0	180	4.4	Miami (Southridge), Fla.	Kansas St.
Jamal Joyner	6-3	193	4.5	Dallas (Carter), Texas	Texas
Anthony Johnson	6-1	190	4.5	Navarro (Texas) C.C.	Texas Tech

### ATHLETE

PLAYER	HT.	WT.	40	HOMETOWN (H.S.)	COLLEGE
DeAntae Grixby	5-10	185	4.4	Omaha (Central), Neb.	Nebraska
Brian Gamble	6-3	214	4.56	Alto, Texas	Texas A&M
William Bartee	6-2	195	4.4	Butler (Kan.) County College	Oklahoma
Brandon Drumm	6-2	220	4.5	Anchorage, Alaska	Colorado
Josh Brown	6-1	175	4.6	Foyil, Okla.	Nebraska



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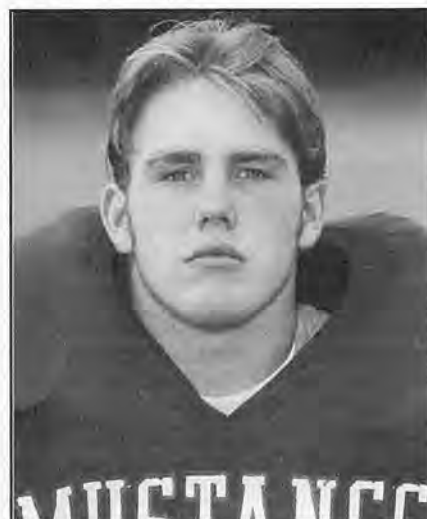
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sive lineman **Justin Bland** of Chillicothe, Mo., a player who is regarded by most as the top offensive line prospect in the Big 12 region. The Tigers also added some much-needed speed in wide receivers **Teddy Williams** of Daytona Beach, Fla., and **Cameron Ankele** of Coral Springs, Fla. Running back **Zane Gilmore** of Tampa (Robinson), Fla., rushed for 2,400 yards this past season.

Linebacker **Michael Clay** of Houston (Aldine Nimitz), Texas, gives the Tigers a serious boost in Texas, and he's joined at Mizzou by two of his Nimitz teammates — defensive lineman **Jamarcus Joshua** and wide receiver **Eric Spencer**. Defensive end **Justin Smith**, of Jefferson City, Mo., also is well-respected.



**Defensive lineman Charles Mann is considered one the premier players to sign with Baylor.**

Baylor once again put together a great class on paper, but the question again remains how many of the Bears' signees can qualify academically. Running back **Ben Gay** of Spring, Texas, may be the top player in Texas, but probably will start out in junior college. **Brandon Jones** of Frederick, Okla., is the lone quarterback in the class, and **Derrick Percy** of Sugar Land (Kempner), Texas, is a standout offensive lineman.

Linebacker **Fred Rogers** of Navarro (Texas) Community College is the headliner on defense, along with defensive end **Eddrick Brooks** of Northeastern Oklahoma Junior College. Defensive lineman **Charles Mann** of Richardson (Pearce), Texas, and **Ryan Gillenwater** of The Woodlands, Texas, were excellent signings for Baylor.

Oklahoma State signed the player

4504

some consider the top quarterback in the country in **Matt Holliday** of Stillwater, Okla. He will throw to All-America wide receiver **Lawson Giddings** of McAlester, Okla., if Giddings can qualify academically. **Khary Jackson** of Kemper (Kan.) Military Academy heads to Oklahoma State as the possible replacement for departed All-America tight end **Alonzo Mayes**.

All-America linebacker **Troy West** of Hutchinson (Kan.) Community College should make an immediate impact, as should **Terrance Robinson** of Tyler (John Tyler), Texas.

Kansas State stole wide receiver **Quincy Morgan** of Kansas City (Kan.) Community College away from Iowa State and Baylor at the last minute. He has big-time potential. All-America running back **Josh Scobey** of Del City, Okla., is strong and quick, while running back **Frank Murphy** of Garden City (Kan.) Community College should help immediately.

Cornerback **Dale Hall** of Miami, Fla., leads the defensive signees along with All-America defensive end **Eugene Langford** of Wichita, Kan. **Jarvis Miller** of Galveston (Ball), Texas, is an interior defensive lineman who should help immediately on the defensive line.

Iowa State signed 17 junior college players as **Dan McCarney** works to add experience and depth to his squad. Cornerback **Jamarcus Powers** of Blinn (Texas) Junior College is an incredible player who joins **Jason Parrott** of Saddleback (Calif.) Community College in the secondary. **Clyde Sanders** of Sacramento (Calif.) College should play immediately on the defensive line.

**Ennis Haywood** of Dallas (Carter), Texas, is the key high school All-America-caliber running back inked by the Cyclones. Offensive lineman **Zac Butler** of Iowa City is considered an outstanding prospect, while **David Napp** is another offensive line prospect from the Cyclones' own backyard of Ames, Iowa.

Texas Tech brings up the rear in the Big 12.

The possibility of impending NCAA-imposed probation appears to have kept many top players away from Lubbock. Safety **Anthony Johnson** of Navarro headlines the class, and should be an instant starter. Linebacker **Michael Wilbon** also comes out of Navarro and could be an impact player. ■

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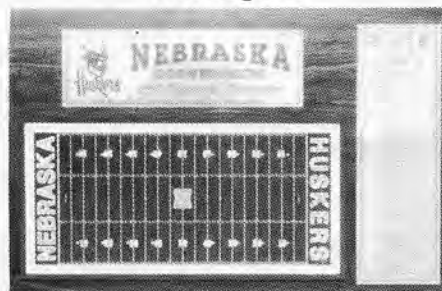
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THE STORY IS, Clair Bee refused to use a zone defense when his Long Island University basketball teams played home games in a small gymnasium at the Brooklyn College of Pharmacy.

The issue was one of sportsmanship, which was defined quite differently at the time.

Bee, who is credited with developing the 1-3-1 zone defense, thought using it in the Brooklyn College of Pharmacy gym "would give his team an unfair advantage on a court that was 24 feet shorter than regulation," Mike Douchant wrote in the "Encyclopedia of College Basketball."

So Bee's teams always played man-to-man defense at home.

Even so, LIU was 225-3 there during Bee's 21 seasons as coach. The Blackbirds won 139 consecutive games at home beginning in the 1937-38 season and ending in late January of 1951.

It was a remarkable streak under a remarkable coach who has been described by Indiana's Bobby Knight as "one of the greatest analytical basketball minds we've ever had."

Knight can be considered among Bee's coaching disciples. One thing Knight didn't learn from Bee, however, was an appreciation for the zone defense and its variations. Rather, Knight's defensive preference reflects the influence of Henry "Hank" Iba, another legendary coach.

(It was "Mr. Iba" to other coaches who knew and respected him.)

Iba's teams at Oklahoma A&M (State) almost exclusively played man-to-man defense, although when 7-foot Bob Kurland was Iba's center, the Aggies played some zone-type defense as well.

The influence of Iba and Knight on college basketball defenses in the Midwest is unmistakable, according to Danny Nee. They represent the "tradition of the purist, of the man-to-man (defense)," he said at a news conference on the Monday after his Cornhuskers' 53-43 victory over Oklahoma. "I think on the East and West Coast, there are more zones, going back to Nat Holman and CCNY."

Holman coached at City College of New York from 1919 to 1960, compiling a record of 423-190. His 1949-50 team won both the NCAA Tournament and the National Invitation Tournament, the more prestigious of the two at the time. No other team ever has accomplished that.



The game was considerably different when Holman and Bee coached. And as it has evolved, zone defenses have become less popular. Playing man-to-man has become a point of pride.

Nee compared playing a zone defense to riding a golf cart instead of walking. However, "I'm going to play zone because it'll help me win," he said, laughing with those at the news conference.

"I'll ride a golf cart. I mean, there's no purist here."

The victory against Oklahoma was Nebraska's third in a row, and it was accomplished by relying on a 2-3 zone defense that limited the Sooners to their lowest point total since 1982. They came to the Devaney Sports Center on an eight-game winning streak. They were averaging 76.8 points per game.

The Sooners made only 16-of-53 shots from the field against Nebraska's zone. That's 30.2 percent. They could score only two points in the final four

**By relying on a 2-3 zone in Nebraska's 53-43 home-court win, the Huskers held Oklahoma to its lowest point total since 1982.**

and a half minutes of the game.

They were 5-of-16 from three-point range, and committed 23 turnovers.

The last time Nebraska scored fewer than 53 points and won was in 1984 — a span of 420 games.

At his post-game news conference, Nee told reporters that he had used his "special" 2-3 zone. He was being facetious. "If you go to any grade school in town, you'll see it," he said.

"But as basic as it is, it seems to work like magic for us."

The Cornhuskers relied heavily on the 2-3 zone defense during their three-game, Big 12 winning streak, in which opponents made only 32.6 percent of their field goal attempts.

Nebraska's zone took a serious hit in a 105-91 loss at Texas, which ended the streak. The Longhorns shot 55.2





# IN A ZONE

**Even the proud are beginning to see that man-to-man is not always the answer**

The success of a zone defense depends on such athleticism.

"The key to our zone is contesting shots," Nee said. "No matter how far, how quickly they pass the ball around the perimeter, we've been having our defender get there and contest the shot."

"In the Oklahoma State game, we were flying at them. Here (in the Oklahoma game), we were flying at them. Usually when you think of zone, you move the ball, you set a screen, and you get an open shot. But we have not been giving up a lot of open shots in the zone defense."

Nebraska hasn't had a set plan for playing its 2-3 zone. The flow of the game has determined how much, or how little, the Cornhuskers had used it. "If you think I go and say we're going to play 15 minutes or 20 minutes (of zone), it's not that way at all. It's a part of our defense. We can use it like at Oklahoma State for 30 minutes or we can use it for 10," said Nee. "It's just how it fits, how it's working."

"Foul trouble, injuries . . . we sometimes look and see when a shooter goes off the floor or a shooter comes on the floor, going in and out of it. I've always liked to change defenses."

"Jimmy Williams is in charge of it. He just does a nice job."

Williams, of course, is Nebraska's assistant head coach.

Despite what some schooled in the

Iba tradition might consider a stigma attached to zone defenses, they have been more commonplace in the Big 12 this season, according to Nee.

Oklahoma played some zone, though not against Nebraska.

"Everyone's using it as needed," Nee said. "I turned on the Baylor-Oklahoma State game, and I saw Oklahoma State in a zone. I mean, I thought I was on the wrong station. I was really surprised."

Cowboy coach Eddie Sutton played for Iba and is among the nation's foremost practitioners of man-to-man defense. "But then, two years ago, he came in here and played zone against us," Nee said of Sutton. "I don't get it. I don't think there's any pattern. But I think there's more zone being used."

Texas coach Tom Penders, another man-to-man devotee, "is playing zone, too. But I think it was because of (Kris) Clack's injury," Nee said. "Against Texas Tech, they played no zone."

As with anything else in coaching philosophy, defensive approaches go through cycles. What's popular among coaches today might fall out of favor tomorrow as offenses adjust, and vice versa.

"Periodically, you'll see a team arrive at the Final Four that has played zone," said Nee.

"The three-point shot and the (shot) clock are two contradictions. The three-point shot says, hey, why would

percent from the field, including 11-of-21 from three-point range. But it worked again in a 63-49 victory against Iowa State at the Devaney Sports Center three days later.

The Cyclones were frustrated by the zone, shooting only 34.6 percent from the field. "That's two weekends in a row where our defense was the difference-maker," said Nee. "We don't have to score 70 or 80 points. We can play defense and win. Last year's team couldn't play like this and win."

Nebraska last held two conference opponents under 50 points 14 seasons ago.

Nee has always used multiple defenses, so a zone isn't a departure. It's a matter of emphasis. "I like our zone defense," he said. "It's a good complement to what we do because of our athleticism."

"Everyone knows Tyrone (Lue) is very athletic. But I don't think guys like Andy Markowski and Venson (Hamilton) get their just due . . . and Larry Florence. They are very athletic."



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you play zone and give up a three-point shot? With a good zone, though, they don't get the shot at the front part of the clock. It can be a forced shot at the backside of the clock. We saw that many times with Oklahoma. They got down and they were not taking their shots in a rhythm.

"I hate to have my offense be down to the last three seconds, shooting threes. So many times I looked up at the clock and it was into single digits, and I wondered: 'When the hell are they going to shoot it?'"

"Sometimes they did not get the shot they wanted. That's good defense."

The Cornhuskers have taken to playing defense, whether it's a zone or man-to-man, "especially at home, when the crowd gets into it," said sophomore Cookie Belcher, one of the team's best defenders.

Junior Troy Piatkowski agreed. "If everybody plays defense, we're going to win," he said.

"Defense wins games," Lue said after the Oklahoma victory.

The zone is part of that, and "I think they like it," Nee said, adding with a laugh: "Lue likes it when he's tired or when he's in foul trouble. But he wants to play man-to-man when he's on."

"It's a good complement because of our athleticism, because some of those kids have cat-like quickness. They really can explode. So it's been a nice defense for us."

Perhaps the biggest problem in teaching zone defense is changing the perception. Players have to work hard in order for a zone to be successful. It's not an opportunity to rest and relax. "I think when players think zone, they think of grade school: Hands go up and you stand there," Nee said.

Recently, he watched his son, Kevin, playing in a basketball game at the YMCA, he said. "They went down the court, and it was a '1-2-2.' And then they went down the court, and it was a '2-3.'"

"There were some kids who, if they moved six inches in either direction, they moved a lot."

If the coach told a player to stand in a particular place, the player simply stood there. "Why they would teach that type of basketball to 10-year-olds is beyond me," said Nee.

The zone was not a passive defense, as Bee and Holman conceived it.

"But yes, there's that perception," Nee said. ■



## Worth The Price Of Admission

*This year's squad may not be the most talented team Nebraska has seen, but for entertainment value, there may not be an equal*

Nebraska's 1990-91 men's basketball team won a school-record 26 games, beat four nationally ranked opponents, five that were in the NCAA Tournament and demolished five others by at least 25 points.

It was the kind of team that comes around, say, once a century — the kind that would predictably smother most of its foes just on talent.

The Cornhuskers had three eventual NBA players in 7-foot-2 center senior Rich King, 6-9 junior forward Tony Farmer and 6-6 freshman guard Eric Piatkowski. They had three savvy seniors in Beau Reid, Clifford Scales and Keith Moody, and two big junior forwards, Carl Hayes and Dapreis Owens, who created matchup nightmares for almost everyone.

Had they had any postseason experience and avoided late-season, off-court problems with Farmer and point guard Jose Ramos, this was a group good enough to make a serious run at the Final Four. By far, that's the best Nebraska team I've seen in 10 years on the beat.

But in terms of entertainment value, I'd just as soon watch this year's group of Cornhuskers — a group of players who feed off one another in order to achieve success.

Junior point guard Tyronn Lue might be the best player ever to wear a Nebraska uniform, but if center Venson Hamilton and off-guard Cookie Belcher are having off-nights, the Cornhuskers are going to struggle.

It's a team short on depth, but one that has enough talent to excite Nebraska coach Danny Nee.

"As far as coachability and doing what we want, I give them an 'A,'" Nee said after the Cornhuskers came a couple of plays away from upsetting fourth- and fifth-ranked Kansas Feb. 1. "They've been pretty solid on it. We haven't done it every time out, but we feel if we have a plan, we're going to

execute it."



In Lue and Hamilton, Nebraska has two of the best 10 players in the Big 12. Lue likely will be in the NBA next year if he wants to go pro, and Hamilton could follow in a year.

I imagine almost every coach in the Big 12 would love to have that inside-outside combo.

"On a given night, Nebraska can beat Kansas. I really believe that, because if you have a couple of great players, you can be competitive," Nee said. "And on a given night, when the ball falls for you, and



**The 1990-91 team, which featured Rich King, had the talent to reach the Final Four.**

your other players play well, the rest is history."

Then there's Belcher, a muscular sophomore who Nee calls his next star.

Junior forward Andy Markowski isn't blessed with outstanding athletic skills, but he makes plays you don't expect simply because he often outworks his opponent. Nebraska's other forward, Larry Florence, is undersized at 6-5. But Florence's strength and speed allow him to defend different types of players and makes him a dan-

gerous transition player.

Off the bench, junior Troy Piatkowski seems to be gaining confidence in his shooting (he hit five three-pointers against Kansas), while freshmen Chad Johnson and Brant Harriman — both of whom are playing primarily out of need — are looking more comfortable with each game.

"The teams that raise their level and find ways to win in February are going to be the teams that are going to have successful years," Nee said. "I think we all have to look in the mirror and say, 'What can I do to get better?'"

Halfway through the Big 12 Conference schedule, Nebraska was among five teams tied for fourth place at 4-4. The Cornhuskers should fare better down the stretch.

Reason No. 1: Seven of their last eight games were against teams they were either tied with or ahead of in the standings.

Reason No. 2: Lue. Sure, he makes too many turnovers. But there aren't better hands to put the ball in than his when a game's on the line.

Asked what areas of his game he needs to improve, Lue grinned and responded, "What do you think? There's always some things you can work on."

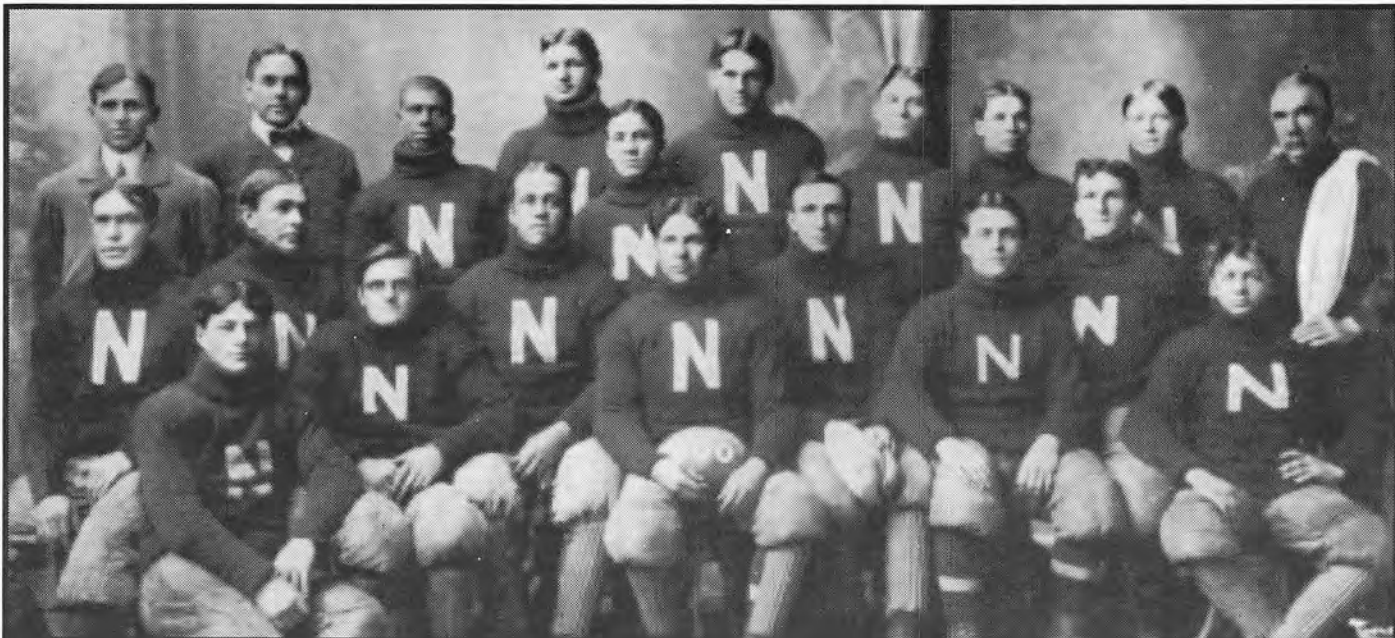
Reason No. 3: Defensive effort. This team can get after it, even in a 2-3 zone. In each of their first four conference wins, the Cornhuskers held their opponents to 35 percent or less from the field. Nee has convinced this group to enjoy playing defense.

"Tyronn asked me what 'winning ugly' is," Nee said. "It's winning with your defense. One team shoots 32 percent and the other team shoots 30 percent, you play defense and you rebound and you bang and you make your free throws."

It's not how the 1990-91 team would have done things. ■

**Curt McKeever** is a sports writer, covering the University of Nebraska for the *Lincoln Journal Star*. In addition to reporting on football he is the primary beat writer for the men's basketball and baseball teams.



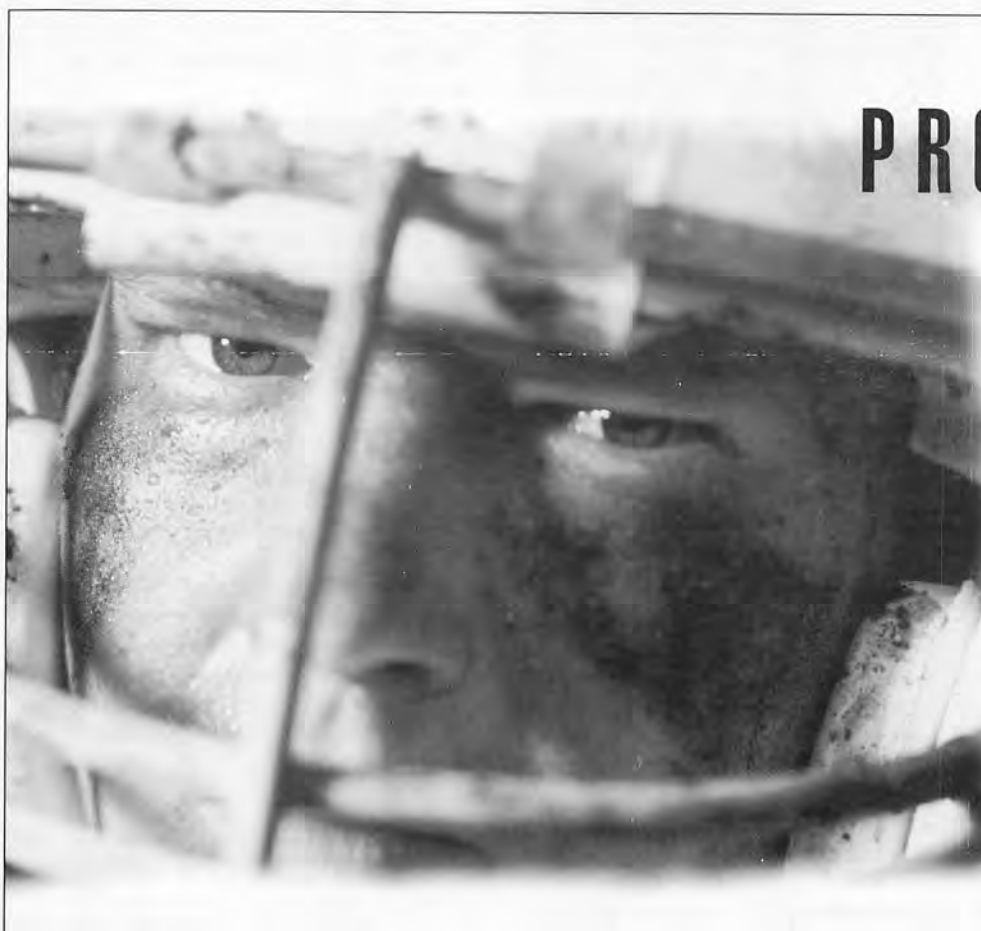


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# Huskers Illustrated

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# Baby Steps

**First-year coach Dave Van Horn understands that before the Huskers can climb into the nation's elite, they must first regain their footing in the power-heavy Big 12**

**By Steve Sipple**

**F**irst-year Nebraska baseball coach Dave Van Horn plans to see the Cornhuskers play in Omaha sometime in the near future. And when Van Horn talks about playing up the road, he doesn't mean his team's annual game at rival Creighton.

Van Horn, who took over the Nebraska baseball program on Jan. 8, about a month after John Sanders was relieved of his duties following 20 years on the job, has a goal to see the Huskers make the trip to Nebraska's largest city to play in the College World Series.

That's a lofty goal, considering Van Horn took over a program that finished 27-35 overall, placed 10th in the 11-team Big 12 Conference race (Colorado doesn't field a team) and didn't qualify for postseason play in

1997.

Still, Van Horn wants to see the Huskers make the trip to Omaha in early June and play on college baseball's biggest stage.

"Every baseball coach in the country should have a goal to play in Omaha," said the 37-year-old Van Horn, who was head coach at Northwestern Louisiana State for the previous two seasons. "I know that it isn't going to happen for us this year, but I'd like to think we'd have a chance to get there sometime in the not-too-distant future."

This season, Van Horn has a more attainable goal in mind. For starters, he would like to see the 1998 version of the Huskers play in the Big 12

Conference Tournament at the end of the season. To do so, Nebraska must finish in the top six during the Big 12 season.

Sound easy? Think again.

Being in a conference with Texas, Texas Tech, Texas A&M, Baylor, Oklahoma and Oklahoma State has

its disadvantages during baseball season.

"We're not trying to set big-time goals this season," Van Horn said. "Our goal we could reach is to finish somewhere in the top six in the Big 12

**ALLSPORTS**

**Kenny Duebelbeis (left) and Ken Harvey (right) will be two of the key ingredients in a Nebraska resurgence.**



and make the tournament. But if our team did that, I would think that we overachieved."

Nebraska opened the season on Feb. 15 at Minnesota. The Huskers are scheduled to play at home for the first time on Feb. 21 against Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

The Huskers return five everyday players and only one starting pitcher off last year's team. The strength of the team should be its offense, which batted .308 as a squad a year ago and scored 491 runs.

The Huskers' top threat at the plate is Ken Harvey, who hit .368, five homers and drove in 28 runs in only 37 games of action.

"Ken Harvey has big-league power," Van Horn said. "He can hit the ball as far as any player I've coached before. If he keeps getting bet-

**"Every baseball coach in the country should have a goal to play in Omaha. . . We're not trying to set big-time goals this season."**

Dave Van Horn  
NU baseball coach



ter, I think he has a very good chance to play professionally in a couple of years."

Harvey will be counted on to bring more than a bat to the diamond, though. The first thing Van Horn did when he accepted the Nebraska job was to tell his players there would be a greater emphasis on defense and pitching.

Harvey was moved to first base during fall drills, and will likely spend the season there.

During the first two weeks of practice under Van Horn in January, Harvey got his fill of working in the field.

"Yeah, it gets tiring, and I don't like it all that well," Harvey said. "But to get to the next level, that's something we have to get better at."

Harvey joins an experienced infield.

Kevin Harrington at second base, Bryan Schmidt at shortstop, Clifton Durham and third and catcher Andrew Sawyers return to reclaim their starting jobs.

Van Horn has been impressed with his double-play combination of Schmidt and Harrington.

"Our middle infield is pretty solid," he said. "We think we have the making of a pretty good infield."

In the outfield, only Erik Mumm started last season. Newcomer Jeff Hedman, who arrived as a first baseman, was moved to the outfield this winter.

If the Huskers have a stable of mostly inexperienced pitchers. Kenny Duebelbeis, who went 3-5 with a 7.89 earned run average last season, is the only member of the Husker staff who started more than four games last season. Fighting for spots in the Nebraska rotation will be Jay Sirianni (1-0, 8.82 ERA), Brian Zubor (1-1, 4.64) and Jarod Beringer (3-3, 6.68).

"Our pitching staff is about what we expected it to be," Van Horn said. "We don't really have a lot of experience, so we'll sort of go with pitching by committee until we have some guys step up and earn the jobs." ■

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## No Osborne, No Problem

*Nebraska didn't lose a step in its recruiting efforts despite the coaching change that could have crippled most programs*

**S**uspense was in short supply the day Nebraska announced its football letter-of-intent signees.

The list of 20 scholarship recruits included no surprises. The Lincoln and Omaha newspapers published lists including 20 of the names on the day before the letter-of-intent signings. (Offensive lineman Matt Shook, who was signed the weekend following signing day, brought the class to 21.) A list in the national championship issue of *Huskers Illustrated* published in January included 17 of the signees.

Two of the remaining four names were on a list of those considering Nebraska.

There were no secrets, no unexpected recruits. And only one defection.

Derrick Harmon, a defensive back from Memphis, Tenn., changed his mind, after making an oral commitment three days earlier. Harmon's sister, the *Lincoln Journal Star* reported, suffers from sickle-cell anemia, and Harmon signed a letter-of-intent with Memphis to stay close to his sister.

Harmon's decision was understandable — and, of course, commendable.

Frank Solich addressed the issue, indirectly. "A commitment is a commitment," he said at a news conference to announce his first recruiting class as the Cornhuskers' head coach.

"Certainly when we commit the scholarship, we will honor that scholarship. We feel that players when they make a commitment to come, we're going to believe their word.

"But yet, there are cases when, for whatever reason, you may see a change."

During the final month, there was a change or two. Frank Strong, a running back from Stockton, Calif., reportedly made an oral commitment to Nebraska and then changed his mind.

Early commitments have been the norm in recent seasons.

"If you look around the country, you see more of that," said Solich.

"I see more of that back on the East Coast, as a position coach and area recruiter. I've seen that back there, where they get so many players in (summer football) camp and there's a push to do that. They see them on tape, and then as juniors, they're being offered by a lot of schools.

"So you have to really pick up your recruiting on that end. You can no longer wait until a guy is part way through his senior season, get his senior (video)tape, give him a call and think you're going to have a chance to recruit him. It just does not work that way. You've got to be on him early."

Nebraska got a good look at 10 of those who signed in Big Red camp.

"That was a big plus for us because not only did we get a chance to evaluate them on film but we had a chance to view them first-hand, going through some drills, going through basic practices we have in our football camp," Solich said. "So we were able to get really a great evaluation on those players."

This year's recruits were identified long before Dec. 10, when Tom Osborne announced he would be stepping aside as head coach after the Orange Bowl game. As a result, the recruiting class shouldn't be considered exclusively Osborne's last or Solich's first.

Rather, it's a "combination," said Solich.

"This was just kind of a taste for me as far as what it's going to be like," he said. "It'll be more difficult than what it was this year in terms of travel and in terms of just visiting more prospects early on.

"Normally what happens is, you go to one coach's (recruiting) area; he takes you and he has visit after visit

after visit lined up. Some of those guys are going to visit Nebraska, and some maybe not.

"Some will end up committing to Nebraska, and some will not."

As an assistant coach, Solich was responsible for recruiting Omaha, Ohio, Pennsylvania, the East Coast and Canada. As head coach, his responsibility is everywhere the Cornhuskers recruit.

The head coach is "shuffled along

**Frank Solich was happy to see only two defections — neither of which was tied to Osborne stepping down in December.**



**Mike Babcock**



J.C. Edley

from one school to one home to another," he said. "Then when you get done with that area, you get on the plane and fly to another area, and the (assistant) coach in that area takes you around to all those different homes and schools. You just keep going like that."

Solich and his assistants, who technically included Osborne, apparently managed to avoid getting lost in their pursuit of the 21 players from seven states besides Nebraska, and Canada.

Those players, almost to a man, held firm despite Osborne's unexpected decision. ■



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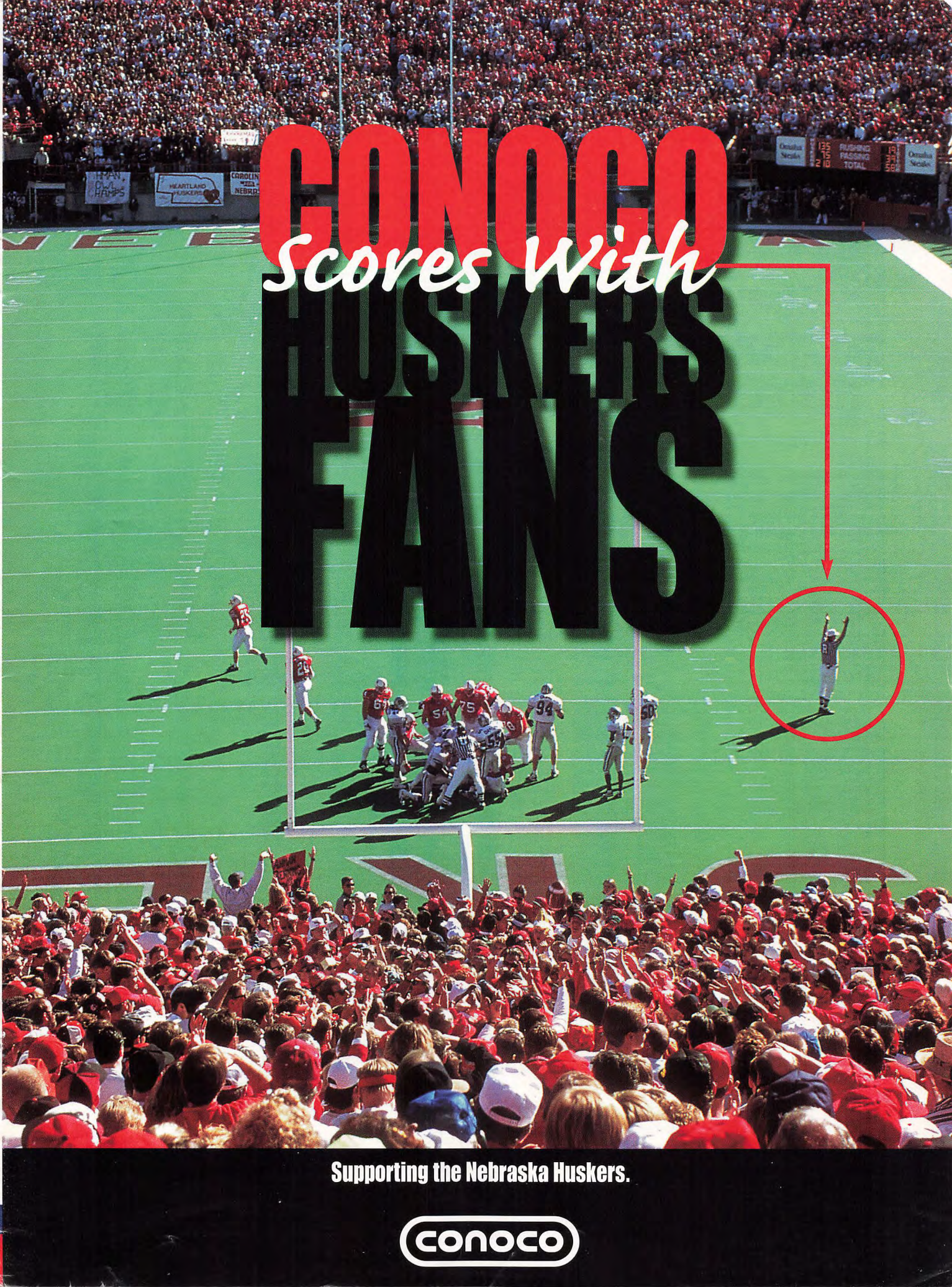
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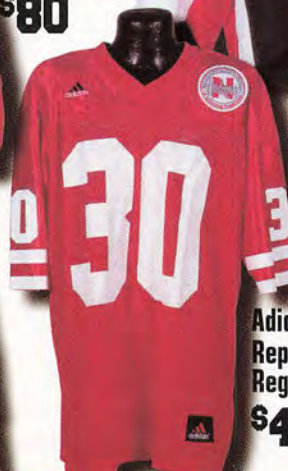
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